

**By the Grace of
the Gods:
Volume 4**

Roy

VISIT...

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By the Grace of the Gods

Roy
Illust. Ririnra

4



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“Oh really?
What’s the problem?
Miyabi was also the
name of the daughter
of the founder of the
Saionji Company.
I named you after
our ancestor.”

“Nobody was
talking about that,
Dad! Why are you
bringing it up?!”

Pioro Saionji

Miyabi Saionji

By the Grace of the Gods 4

A passionate discussion about slime evolution with slime researcher friends and employees?!





An abnormality
with the cleaner
slimes at the store?!
But it could be a sign
of a new evolution...



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Chapter 3 Episode 1: The Melancholy of Separation

After I saw the duke's family off, I decided to do some training and ran back home. On the way to the abandoned mine, I spotted tons of adventurers and assumed they were after the grell frogs. As long as I was nearby, I figured I could go catch a few too. I took my waders out of my Item Box and changed my destination to the swamp.

The swamp was once again packed with adventurers. There were at least a hundred of them from what I could see. Some went to other swamps, so this wasn't even everyone. Some of them were also wearing jumpsuits or waders. They must have been selling nicely.

I noticed a group of five who were all wearing jumpsuits and waders. Not only that, but I recognized them. It was Sikum's Pier, the group that sold me the bloody slime. I went over to greet them, but it looked like something had happened. Kai was a bit disgruntled, and the others were patting him on the back, trying to cheer him up.

"Hello."

"Hm? You're that Ryoma kid, right? Thanks for the help the other day."

"No problem, I got a nice slime out of it," I said. The man who was drunk last time walked up to me.

"You that guy who bought the slime?"

"Yes, indeed I am."

"Yeah? Sorry about before. I'm Thane. Apparently I went at you when I was drunk, but I was too drunk to remember. Thanks for buying the slime, though. And what's more, you tipped us off to how we could make a profit here," he said. Thane was behaving nothing like last time. He acted like an average drunk before, but now he seemed to have his act together.

"It was nothing. Anyway, did something happen? It looks like something's bugging Kai."

"Nothing I'd consider a problem, but there was a little something. Before that, though, let me introduce these guys," Kai said and looked to the two men who dragged Thane away before. First, he put his hand on the shoulder of the slightly short one. "This is Kei, my little brother."

"I'm Kei. It's nice to meet you."

"It's nice to meet you, too."

“And this is—”

“Peyron. Nice to meet you.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Peyron.”

“The five of us make up a party called Sikum’s Pier. You know about it?”

“Yes.”

“Actually, we used to be fishermen,” he said, but I had no idea why he brought that up.

“Sorry, Kai’s bad at explaining things,” Shin said, taking over for Kai. “I’ll tell you the rest.”

From what he told me, Sikum was a village by the biggest lake in the country. They were born there and raised as fishermen, so they were used to handling nets. While it was somewhat different wading through mud than through water, they were quicker than the other adventurers and able to catch many grell frogs. They made a killing on this over the last few days, and they had already captured over twenty frogs today alone, but when they took their eyes off their basket of frogs for a moment, someone swapped it with their own basket. These baskets were lent out by the guild, and many of the adventurers had identical ones, so there was no telling who committed the crime.

“I see. So someone stole your catches?”

“I guess, maybe.”

His response was oddly ambiguous. While I was wondering about that, Kei showed me their basket.

“As far as the number of frogs go, this basket actually has more than ours did,” he said. This basket had a few more than twenty grell frogs, but they all looked weak. A couple of them in particular were injured and hardly breathing.

“Some idiot was catching their frogs wrong. They won’t be worth as much like this, and they’ll be even more worthless if they die. If we try to take them back to town like this, they’ll all die on the way there.”

“So they swapped with our healthy frogs.”

“We could just catch some more, but it still sucks. That’s all.”

“Do you know how much you’d make selling these?” I asked.

“Two hundred sute if they’re alive but weak when we get to the guild. Fifty if they’re dead. Probably something in between if they’re on the verge of death. After getting screwed over with that slime, we made sure to look all this up in advance.”

“And if they’re in good condition, you’d get a thousand sute per frog?”

“Right, what about it?”

“Will you sell me these grell frogs for three hundred sute each?” I requested.

“Yeah, I can do that, but are you sure about this?” Shin asked and cocked his head.

“It’s more than we’d get selling them to the guild, so no reason to say no.”

“He’ll be taking a hit, though.”

“If I were planning to sell them to the guild, maybe, but I’m taking them for personal use.”

“Like what? Can you make medicine?”

“Yes. I can use them to make antidotes and the like, so I figured I would come get some frogs to stock up on medicine.”

“Yeah? Well, if you’ll pay more than the guild, we appreciate it.”

“We can just catch some more for the guild. Go ahead and buy all of these.”

“Thank you.”

I bought twenty-five grell frogs from Sikum’s Pier for five hundred sute.

“You’re something else.”

“I wondered about this when you bought that slime for a small gold coin. You’ve got a lot of money to shell out.”

“Considering all the business his store gets, it’s no wonder.”

“You’ve been to my store?”

“Yeah, we were just planning to try it out at first, but it was so cheap, quick, and great for our clothes, so we’ve been frequenting the place a ton.”

“Especially in the last few days, just to clean this sludge off.”

“I was surprised to see how useful those slimes could be. At least they’re good for something.”

“It’ll be tough not having that laundromat around when we go back home, though. Could you open a branch in our town? I could talk the fishing guild into giving you a good location.”

“We discuss opening new branches sometimes, but it’s too early for that.”

“I guess you can’t just open new stores on a whim. But if you do want a branch in Sikum, get in contact with us. We could at least help you find a location.”

“We don’t typically leave the village, unless it’s to visit a village nearby. Should be easy enough to get in contact with us.”

“If we use our connections in the fishing guild, maybe we could get you a better place than the merchant’s guild could.”

“Thank you, I’ll keep that in mind.”

We came to a nice mutual agreement, thankfully. I parted ways with them to finally go to the mine.



I arrived at the mine. The first order of business was to let my slimes and limour birds outside and let them play around. With that done, I dug a hole in the side of a random tunnel to set up some living space, as well as a medicine mixing room. My shelves and furniture were made of stone, but that was good enough for now.

I called my bloody slime and cleaners over to process the grell frogs. The weak ones had to be taken care of quickly, and I still had grell frogs from a couple days ago sitting in water tanks in my Dimension Home. They were healthy when I caught them, so they could survive for at least a week. The average medicine man would take advantage of that time to process the frogs as cautiously as possible, but thanks to my slimes, I didn't need to take it slow.

First, I drew a separation magic circle off to the side of the room, then set up as many stone containers as I would need for all the parts I was cutting the frogs into. I took the grell frogs out of my Dimension Home and left them in a stone cage in the corner of the room, concluding my preparations. I decided to start with the frogs I bought that day.

When I picked up a random frog, it struggled in my hands. I held onto it firmly so it wouldn't get away, then killed it with a knife. I sent the bloody slime into the gash and let it absorb all the blood. Next, I needed to cut the frog into pieces. Following the knowledge from my Medicine skill, I divided it into the necessary parts. Not a single drop of blood oozed out as I did. The bloody slime seemed to do a perfect job. After that, I washed all the parts with water to get rid of the frog mucus, as well as any filth that got on while I cut them apart. The mucus lowered the quality of these parts, but it was extremely difficult to remove. Not only that but handling the parts too roughly could damage the organs, also reducing their quality. That was why you had to be cautious. It was a job that demanded a lot of attention. If I were taking the normal approach, that is.

When I gave my cleaner slimes their orders, they consumed the frog parts and the entirety of the containers that held them, then began to remove the mucus. The work was done in a matter of seconds. I checked the parts, but despite how fast they went about it, no damage was done.

There was one last job to do. The processed components needed to be dried. This would normally involve the use of wind and fire magic, but the time it took and the heat of the fire reduced the effectiveness of the medicine in the process. In my case, though, I could use alchemy to separate the moisture from the actual material. This method wouldn't affect their composition, and it was quick enough that it wouldn't do any physical damage. I appraised each part of the grell frogs, and it said that they were all processed perfectly.

Naturally, I produced the best possible products. My slimes were helpful here as well.

I silently processed the grell frogs for a while until all those frogs I caught before and six of the frogs I bought today were made into perfect products. That left nineteen frogs from today's purchase, but they had been violently caught, wounding their internal organs and causing bleeding that inevitably lowered the quality. Even so, I handled them swiftly enough that they were of a high enough quality to be usable. I fed the leftover skin and flesh to my limour birds. From what I heard, they enjoyed eating everything from meat and fish to fruit, vegetables, and grains. Limour birds were omnivores, but it seemed like meat made up the core of their diet. I decided to ask the Tamer's Guild about it later.



I kept working until it grew dark outside. Just to be safe, I had all my slimes and limour birds gather in the mine. The slimes had grown fairly strong, but it was still dangerous at night. I blocked the entrance with stone and only left gaps for air to flow through.

This was my first night alone for some time. I thought back to when I first came to this world. I read that letter from the gods, found a cliff where I made my house and learned earth magic to create a cave. At first, the best I could manage was using Break Rock to slowly dig my way through, but when I managed to make a hole big enough to fit in, I cast Rock to create a stone wall at the entrance and block myself in. It was a simple home. Over time, I fixed it up and got used to the forest, then began to train and hunt at night.

I didn't feel motivated to do any of that at the moment, but as long as I had the materials available, I decided to make medicine. I entered the medicine room, took some herbs I saved from the Forest of Gana out of my Item Box, and placed them all on the shelf. I wanted to make a wooden shelf for those at some point. In any case, now I had all the ingredients I needed to make antidotes. They required a grell frog liver, a poisonous plant called kasuri, a kunashi fruit to weaken the poison and make it usable as medicine, a joshu flower to make it somewhat healthier, and five types of useful grass that acted as a diuretic.

I started by using earth magic to make a pot and a spatula to stir with, then I made a mortar and pestle as well. I could buy less crude versions of these tools later. I managed to get by with magic so far, but it would be better to have proper tools on hand. I used water magic to fill the pot, inserted the diced up kasuri and kunashi, and used the Squall spell to rapidly heat the water as I stirred. Some of the ingredients were sensitive to heat, but the medicinal components of

the kasuri and kunashi were not. Once the pot began to simmer, the ingredients changed the color of the water to a poisonous purple. That was the signal to turn off the heat and wait for the concoction to cool down naturally. In the meantime, I carefully mashed up the grell frog livers.

I held my hand over the pot and found that it was an ideal temperature, so I tossed the mashed livers inside. I stirred some more, and when the liquid had cooled down, I added the joshu flowers and uful grass. I tore them into pieces of appropriate size before I added them, then slowly mixed them in as they sank to the bottom. Now I only had to wait until their medicinal properties seeped out.

Wondering what to do until then, I left the medicine room and spotted my limour birds. I took my guitar out of my Item Box and played a couple renowned anime end credits songs. I could happen to see the moon through the ventilation hole, so I picked songs about the moon.

When I was done, a cacophonous sound echoed throughout the cave. It came from the limour birds. They were singing like when I formed contracts with them, but all the echoing in the mine made it hard to tell. It was far too loud. I suffered unexpected damage, but the limour birds seemed to be fine, making me wonder what kind of ears they had. The slimes had no sense of hearing, so I wasn't worried about them.

The limour birds quieted down after that. I listened to them sing as I ate dinner, then returned to the medicine room. The medicinal components of joshu flowers and uful grass could be quickly extracted, so they were just about done. I appraised the liquid in the pot and found that the antidote was incomplete, but was expected to be of high quality. The antidote decomposed poison and increased metabolism to eliminate dangerous substances from the body. There were many kinds of poison with a wide variety of effects, but this was especially effective on paralysis-inducing poison. After usage, it was best to make sure to rehydrate.

It was all a success so far. Next, I took a big cloth out of my Item Box and had it cleaned by my cleaner slimes. This was one of the items I obtained after beating thieves in the forest, but it was perfect for sifting the dregs of the herbs from the medicine. The cloth did seem like it'd be worth a lot of money, but I wasn't concerned about that. I placed the cloth on top of an empty pot and used strands from a sticky slime to set it in place, then I poured the fluid into the pot. The medicine flowed into the pot, while the cloth caught the dregs. Once all the medicine was inside, I took the cloth off and wrung every last drop of the fluid from the dregs. I stirred the medicine with the spatula and appraised it again. Now the spell said that it was finished,

and of the highest quality.

It was a job well done, but I didn't know what to do with the medicine now. If I wanted to preserve it, I would have been better off making pills. I didn't have the ingredients necessary for that, however. When I thought about it further, I remembered that I had the Poison Resistance skill and wouldn't be affected by most poisons, so I had little use for this antidote. I figured I should make some just in case, but I certainly didn't need a pot full of it. This was enough to fill twenty bottles. I used earth magic to make a funnel, a ladle, and tons of bottles, then filled them with medicine one at a time. I put nineteen of them away in my Item Box and toyed around with the twentieth one as I left the medicine room and went to my living space.

I considered whether to sell the medicine to Serge or give it to Jeff, but I was so lost in thought that I accidentally dropped the bottle. The lid popped off and all the medicine flowed out. Something was distracting me. I didn't know if it was because of the age regression Kufo mentioned or what, but I had trouble controlling my feelings. I shouldn't have felt this way at this age. Well, technically I was eleven, but mentally I was over forty, and yet parting with the duke's family made me so lonely. Back on Earth, my colleagues quit and left the company all the time. Work was so brutal that I passed out sometimes. I thought I was used to pain. This wasn't bad enough to make me cry, but it was making me melancholic.

I thought about it for ten seconds, then decided to go to sleep. But before that, I wanted to clean up the spilled medicine. I looked at the bottle and noticed that the medicine was gone. A few slimes were hanging around the room, including cleaners, so maybe they cleaned it up on their own. That saved me the trouble, so I wasn't bothered by it. I headed to the bedroom.

Chapter 3 Episode 2: Emergency

When I woke up and went outside the next day, it was still a bit dark. Maybe it was because I went to bed early. There would be no point in heading to town at this hour, so I decided to set up a kitchen and a storage room in the mine, as well as organize my Item Box.

Almost all my herbs were now stored in the medicine room, but I still had unsold furs in the Item Box. I dug through piles of fur and found tea to put in the kitchen. Another six furs later, I noticed some money. It took me a second to remember that I got it from the thieves. Then there were some weapons and armor, including a spear I'd forgotten I got from a thief named Melzen. I wanted to test that out at some point. Then there was even more fur. This was entirely my fault for holding on to all of it. I could have at least fed it to my slimes and gotten some use out of it.

After organizing for a while longer, I found something strange. It was a goblet made of silver, but all of my kitchenware was either made of stone using earth magic, or carved out of wood. Not only that, but it was adorned with gold and jewels. I didn't know what this extravagant cup was doing in my Item Box. I was fairly certain it didn't come from the thieves. I checked my items before I left the forest, and there was nothing so opulent. But I did remember seeing it somewhere before. I appraised the goblet.

Divine Item: Tekun's Goblet

A divine item created by the God of Wine, containing the same power as its creator. If offered enough magical energy, it can generate an endless supply of wine.

Owner: Ryoma Takebayashi

I thought it was nuts that I had a divine item, but then I remembered that he gave it to me when I met him. I was so frantic at the time that I just shoved it in my Item Box. I needed to get this back to Tekun. I put the goblet back in my Item Box, sent the slimes to my Dimension Home, and hurried to the church in town at full speed.



I arrived in town and headed straight to the church. When I got there, the door was conveniently open.

“Oh, are you here to pray?”

“Yes, may I?”

“Go ahead. But hardly anyone comes to church this early in the morning.”

“I’ve been busy lately. This is the only time I have available.”

“Is that so?”

I was led into the chapel. I already knew the way there, so I wished I could have just run as quickly as possible. But I needed to keep up appearances, so I thanked the girl who guided me, then sat in a chair in the chapel and prayed for Tekun to take me to the Divine Realm. Seconds later, my vision went white. As soon as the light faded, I looked around and saw Tekun. I sighed with relief.

“Ryoma, you called? Dunno how you did that, though. I heard your voice pretty clearly, but why?”

“I prayed at church.”

“Look, if it were that easy to summon a god, we’d visit a million people a day.”

“I guess. Anyway, I need to tell you something.”

“What, did something happen?”

I took Tekun’s goblet out of my Item Box. When he saw it, he opened his eyes wide, staring at the Item Box portal, then the goblet, then back at the portal again.

“Last time we met, you left this with me and ran off, remember?”

“Right, right.”

“At the time, I was looking through my Item Box for something to eat with the wine, but then I got sent back to the church. When I rushed to clean up, I accidentally put the goblet in there. I noticed it when I was organizing my Item Box this morning. Sorry about that. You can take it.”

“All right, great, but you were able to take it with you?”

“It was in the Item Box, but I was able to take it back out in the other world, yes.”

“You could take it out? Hey now, magic is—Well, magic takes spirit and magical energy. Guess there’s no reason you couldn’t use it,” Tekun said and scratched his head. “Show me that for a second.” He pointed to the goblet. When I handed it over, he looked it over and rubbed it a few times.

“Ryoma, you can keep this if you want. Humans call these things divine items and worship them, but we can make infinite copies of this junk. Besides, looks like you’re its owner now anyway.”



“What do you mean? That reminds me, it did say I was the owner when I appraised it.”

“Might be because I left while it was in your possession, so it was like I made it an offering to you. It’s entirely yours now. Whatever, drink up,” Tekun said and pulled a bottle of wine out of nowhere, filled up the goblet, and handed it back to me.

“Are you sure you don’t want to think about it more? Also, it’s too early to drink.”

“Don’t worry about it, you’re just a soul right now. Your body won’t get drunk. Anyway, if you want to chat, first you’ve gotta drink. And as far as the goblet goes, I just told you that I could make as many as I wanted. No skin off my back. Besides, we’ve offered divine items to humans in the past. Travelers from other worlds wish for all sorts of things, but most of the time, it’s divine items. Never been a problem giving this stuff to humans. Anyway, the wine’s more important right now.”

“This hardly seems like something you should just be handing out.”

“Well, it’d probably cause a ruckus if people found out you had it, so hide it somewhere. You can use it when you’re drinking by yourself.”

“All right, then. Anyway, I’m glad to hear that it’s fine. I didn’t take it on purpose, but I still felt bad.”

I drank the wine from the goblet. It was good, but I felt like the alcohol wasn’t as strong as what I got last time. Maybe Tekun was looking out for me.

“Gahaha, there are things that’d cause some trouble if you took them from the Divine Realm, but those are strictly regulated. You should never even get the chance to see those. Don’t worry about it. I mean, this is just a goblet that generates wine. Doesn’t make you strong enough to cut through the wall of a fortress like it was paper, the way some divine items do. If anything, what I’m most curious about is how you were able to take a divine item with you in the first place, but it’s not a big deal.”

“Are you sure? Am I not supposed to do that?”

“Of course you’re not! You can’t just take things from the Divine Realm that easily. It’s crazy that you’re even able to come here.”

“I’ve been here so many times that I forgot about it.”

“Must have something to do with how Gain and friends summoned you to this world.”

“That’s what it sounds like. Will this cause any issues, though?”

“No clue, I’m just the God of Wine and Craftsmen. If you want answers to questions like that, maybe Fernobelias would know.”

“Who’s Fernobelias?”

“Oh, you don’t know? He’s the God of Magic. Spends most of his time in his own territory doing who knows what, but he knows the most about magic and all that crap. But even I barely ever run into him, and I’m a god, so who knows if you’ll ever meet him.”

“I see. I was told that this shouldn’t have any negative effects, so I’m not too concerned about it, but I’d still like to learn how I’m able to do these things, if possible.”

“Weird stuff’s happening with you, so I see why you’d feel that way,” Tekun said, then the surrounding area began to shine. This seemed to be starting sooner than usual. I gulped down the rest of the wine and put the goblet in my Item Box.

“Neat, so this is what it’s like when you go back?”

“Oh right, you weren’t there when I returned last time. Did you ever find Gain and the others?”

“Yeah, caught them right when they got back. Turns out they really did go to your world. I made them agree to take me along to drink Earth booze next time!” Tekun said and guffawed.

“I see. Well, don’t drink too much. Actually, I guess the God of Wine probably can’t drink too much.”

“You got that right! I’m gonna drown myself in the stuff!”

“Speaking of which, what would happen to the Earth drinks when you get back? Would it disappear?”

“Nah, regardless of the world we’re in, we can create copies of their food and drinks using divine power. That’s what your goblet’s for; it can create wine from magical energy. You can drink all you want and don’t have to take any wine from anyone.”

“I see. Then there’s no reason for me not to use it.”

“You got it,” Tekun said with a grin. “Enjoy your wine!”

I was about to respond to Tekun, but my vision went white again, and the next thing I saw was the chapel.

“Couldn’t say it in time. Maybe if I pray now, he’ll hear it. Thanks, I’ll enjoy the wine. Have fun on your trip,” I said in prayer, then gave a donation to the church and left. Now it was time to go to my store. I was a bit late today. The store had already opened.



I was walking to the store when I heard several people laughing nearby. It sounded like they were having fun, and the voices were coming from my store. For some reason, the people outside my store were laughing loudly. I peered inside and saw that Lilyn had knocked out two men.

“Good morning, Lilyn.”

“Oh, Boss. Good morning. I just need to tie these people up. Wait

a moment.”

Lilyn swiftly tied up the two men. In the meantime, I asked Carme to explain the situation.

“Did something happen?”

“It’s been a while since last time, but we got more hoodlums.”

“Oh, then what were those customers laughing about? I’d understand screams, but why laughs?”

“You see, the hoodlums complained about our services and tried to harm our reputation by deliberately getting their clothes dirty with stains that would normally be hard to remove. But the cleaner slimes had no trouble with it, and when the hoodlums unfolded the clothes to try and prove they were still filthy, they were perfectly clean. One customer began to laugh, then another, and then another until the whole crowd was laughing. The hoodlums were about to get violent after that, but Lilyn was quick to capture them, and that’s when you came in,” Carme explained, during which time a guard happened to pass by the store. A customer told him about the situation, so he took the hoodlums away for obstructing a business.

“I don’t know if I should consider myself lucky or not,” I said. I called Carla and Fay over from the back of the store to talk to them too, but for now, everything was under control. We decided to wait until the guards finished investigating, then went about our jobs. That’s when I remembered the antidote I made yesterday.

“So I made this antidote. Keep it around the store in case of some sort of emergency.”

“Understood,” Carla said. She and Fay walked off with several bottles of the medicine. Now I wondered what I should do. Maybe I could do something to improve the store’s security. Now that I thought about it, the store’s windows weren’t especially sturdy. I could probably do something about that.



To test my idea, I went back to the mine and set up three magic circles. I asked my sticky slimes to spit up hardening fluid in a box I had set up. One of the magic circles extracted the water from the fluid, leaving room to add more of the hardening fluid. Next, I combined them with a mixing magic circle, then separated the fluid to extract the water again. I did this repeatedly, thickening the hardening fluid.

When I was still in the forest, I used alchemy to see what would happen if a sticky slime’s fluid was condensed. The results made the fluid harden much more than normal. It would normally crack under a little pressure, but I could only break this condensed version by using enhancement magic.

I drew an alchemy circle with two squares in it, one turned forty-five degrees compared to the other. This was a transformation circle. I also had a baseball-sized orb of condensed hardening fluid that not even my full strength could break. All I needed to do was transform this into a flat board to be used as a window. I didn't know why I never thought of it before.

The hardening fluid was highly transparent. Not entirely, but it was a faint enough yellow that you wouldn't notice it without being told. It would be plenty usable as a window. At the very least, it would be sturdier than the wooden windows that were standard in this country, and they could let light in while keeping cold wind out.

Glass did exist, and the blown glass used for bottles could be made by ordinary craftsmen, so it was cheap and commonplace. Sheets of glass that would work for windows, however, could only be produced with magic, so it was expensive. You could make sheets of glass out of blown glass, but due to quality standards, only highly experienced craftsmen could make them for sale, and few were produced.

According to my construction knowledge, a sheet of glass would cost one medium gold coin at the cheapest, so I had wooden windows installed when I made the store. But if I could make sheets out of this condensed hardening fluid, it would work as a replacement. In addition, this seemed hard enough to be good for security purposes, and it was resistant to fire and heat as well.

As an aside, condensed adhesive fluid does harden too, but it becomes brittle. It also becomes murky and opaque, as well as highly flammable. Ordinary, dried adhesive fluid is somewhat harder to burn than cloth, but once condensed, it burns brightly. I was surprised to find that it had the opposite properties of hardening fluid. The condensed hardening fluid was too hard, while the condensed adhesive fluid was too brittle, and since I had fire magic, I didn't need it as fuel, either.

I didn't think they were worth anything, but somehow, I found some uses for one of them. Earth magic and barriers were enough to endure the cold, so this never occurred to me. I continued to work until night, by which time I had created fifty sheets of condensed hardening fluid.

Chapter 3 Episode 3: Poison and Medicine

When I woke up the next morning and got my slimes together, I noticed one I had never seen before, yet it was one I had a contract with. I used Monster Appraisal on it.

Medicine Slime

SKILLS: Medicine Production 3, Poison Resistance 3, Disease Resistance 5, Physical Attack Resistance 1, Jump 3, Consume 3, Absorb 3, Split 3, Spear Mastery 1

I didn't remember any medicine slimes, so this must have evolved from something else. Considering the Spear Master skill, I suspected it was a poison slime. Much like some medicines could act as poison in certain circumstances, so too could poison work as medicine if used correctly. Never before had a slime that evolved once evolved again, however. It could have achieved the conditions for evolution by consuming the medicine I spilled a couple nights ago, but I thought the cleaners did that. If so, this may have once been a cleaner.

To check, I had all my poison slimes gather around, then filled a stone container with leftover antidote that the slimes began to drink on their own, additional evidence that it may have been a poison slime that evolved. I spilled one bottle of antidote and ended up with one evolved poison slime, so I added enough antidote to the container to fill five bottles.

While they drank, I made many more containers and commanded the medicine slime to show me what it could create. The medicine slime spat up fluid in each container, some thick and some thin. I appraised them all.

Ointment

Styptic

Antidote

Poison (Fast-Acting)

Poison (Slow-Acting)

Paralytic (Fast-Acting)

Paralytic (Slow-Acting)

Bactericide

Curious about the bactericide, I appraised it for more detail.

Bactericide

Created by a medicine slime. Possesses powerful sterilizing effects. Kills bacteria and viruses on the applied area. Must be stored in a sealed container, or else the moisture will instantly evaporate. Harmless to humans.

It sounded like an antiseptic, which I couldn't have been happier about. I was worried to go anywhere outside Jamil territory, from a health perspective. But not wanting to spend too much longer at the mine, I decided to head to the store.



I collected all my slimes and headed to town, arriving after my store had opened. I entered through the employee entrance and found Carme.

“Good morning, Boss.”

“Good morning, Carme.”

“Boss, did something happen to you?”

“Why do you ask?”

“You always arrived before opening time, but today and yesterday you arrived after, so I was wondering why.”

“Oh, I'm fine, just a bit of a kerfuffle the last couple mornings.”

“That's good to hear, but if anything does happen, please tell me.”

“Thank you.”

“Actually, this is a good time to ask that you come to work around this time from now on.”

“Why?”

“You always end up doing all the pre-opening work yourself, so we don't have any work to do. It would help to train newer employees if you could get used to letting them do their jobs.”

“I never thought about how I was stealing all the work. I guess you're right. By the way, Carme, are Fay or Lilyn available at the moment?”

“Fay is out front, and Lilyn should be in the break room. Why?”

“I actually had a suggestion regarding store security, so I wanted to ask for their opinions.”

“I see. Then wait in the office. I'll come get you in a moment.”

I did as asked, and a moment later, Carme and Lilyn came to see me. She was in the room directly across from this one, so Carme's request didn't seem all that necessary.

“Good morning, Boss. I hear you wanted to ask me something.”

“Good morning, Lilyn. I actually wanted to talk about the windows. If someone wanted to break in through those, it’d be pretty easy, right?”

“Yes, a hammer or an axe would do the trick. We’ve been watching them closely.”

“Thank you for all your hard work. So, if I made the windows unbreakable, would that reduce your workload?”

“Obviously, but how would you do that?”

I took a condensed hardening fluid board out of my Dimension Home. Carme looked at it and raised an eyebrow.

“Is this window glass?”

“Not exactly.”

“But judging by the shape and transparency, I don’t see what else it could be. Even if it’s not, this could be used as window glass! Did you make this?”

“Yes, but I don’t plan to put it on sale, if that’s what you’re thinking. They’d be too laborious to mass-produce.”

“I see. Forgive my excitement.”

“Don’t worry about it. Like you said, though, we can use these as window glass. Unlike glass, though, these are plenty durable.” I punched the glass a few times with my unenhanced hand. Lilyn squinted at the sight of it.

“Boss, may I try?”

“Of course, Lilyn. I have extras, so you’re free to break it if you can.”

We gave Lilyn some space, and she punched the board a few times, but it didn’t leave a dent. Next she tried it with what seemed to be enhancement magic, but only managed to crack it a bit.

“It’s certainly sturdy,” she said. “Replacing all the windows on the first floor with these would make it harder for criminals to break in, no doubt about that. But if we were cornered, we wouldn’t be able to escape through the windows. That’s something we’ll have to be wary of.”

“I never considered that. Maybe if there was a way to easily open them from the inside. I might need to think about this.”

“But this will be great for keeping the enemy out. Installing a few to reduce the avenues they can sneak in from would be a good idea. Besides, as long as we know the windows aren’t an escape route, we can plan alternatives.”

“I see. Then you don’t mind if I replace the windows with these?”

“Please do.”

I began work on replacing the store’s wooden windows with my condensed hardening fluid boards. I started from the back of the store, where no customers were. Next I did the side of the store facing our

neighboring store, then the side facing the road. I was going to end with the front, which faced the residential district, but then I heard shouts from inside the store.

“What’d you do to my laundry?! Is this place supposed to wreck its customers’ clothes?!” someone growled. I rushed to the entrance and saw a seedy man picking a fight with Fina, with Fay trying to intervene. On the counter sat clothes that were torn from the collar to the hem, something that our cleaning process could never produce. The bag it came in was unharmed, so it couldn’t have gotten caught on something and damaged when it was being carried. I knew the man was creating an excuse to complain, but it was still vexing. Sincere complaints were one thing, but I couldn’t accept these lies. At times like these, firmly objecting to the malicious customer was of the utmost importance. That didn’t apply when there were actual problems, but you must never answer to ludicrous demands.

“What’s the problem, Sir?” I said to the whining man.

“Boss?” Fay responded before the man did. I shot a look at the man to signal that I would take care of this. Fay understood and made space for whatever action was necessary.

“Who the hell are you, shrimp?! Piss off!”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that. I’m the manager. Has my store done something to offend you?”

The man’s eyebrow twitched. “Yeah, you bet it has! Your dump of a store ruined my best clothes! You’d best pay up for the damages, you scammer!”

“May I see that for a moment?” I asked and took the clothes in question to investigate. I had to make it look like I took the complaints seriously. If I decided that his complaints were false before properly checking the clothes, it would harm my reputation. Not that I cared what this ruffian thought, but ordinary customers were watching.

The collar had clearly been sliced with a blade, and it appeared that the clothes were torn apart from there. They could have been damaged during cleaning if they were washed by hand, but the cleaner slimes lacked the power to rip this cloth. The customer’s dishonesty was plain to see. My slimes could never have done what he claimed, so he didn’t even do enough research to make a valid complaint. I had been public about the use of slimes at my laundromat since we first opened, so he would have been better off bringing melted clothes.

“You can’t lie about my business like this, Sir,” I said, looking the man right in the eye.

“You calling me a liar?! You telling me those clothes ain’t ripped?! Not only do you not say sorry, but you say I’m wrong?! What kind of

place is this?! You're all corrupt!" the man yelled so all the other customers could hear.

"Then I'll prove it," I declared. The man looked confused, and all the other customers turned to look at me. "One moment, please. I'll demonstrate how we wash clothes at this establishment. I'm sure you see why this couldn't have happened."

I had Fay handle the crowd, then grabbed a cleaner slime from the back of the store and brought it to the customers. "Now, I'll need some clothes to wash. Would someone like to lend me their laundry? I'll wash it for you, on the house." A few of the customers spoke up. "You there, then. Thank you." I took a bag of clothes from a man in the crowd and dumped it out on the counter. It contained a shirt and pants that were thoroughly covered in blood. His clothes were normal, but he was brawny enough that I took him to be an adventurer.

"Watch this," I said and ordered the cleaner slime to begin its ordinary laundry process. It wasn't long before the blood began to disappear from the clothes. Customers gasped with surprise from all around, and less than twenty seconds later, the shirt and pants were all clean. "See? There you have it. There's no way anyone's clothes could end up like yours did."

"B-But—"

"If you think this is a fluke, I can keep going until you change your mind."

After I washed clothes for another ten customers, the man had nothing more to say. "Slimes don't have the ability to do this kind of damage to begin with," I said, ready to finish him off with a reasoned argument. "They don't have claws or fangs to slice cloth, nor do they have the strength to tear it. Our slimes take the clothes into their bodies and consume the filth in the stains. No physical strength is exerted as it would be during normal handwashing. Not only do we never tear clothes, but the slimes do little damage any sort to cloth. I've been washing my clothes with this method for close to three years, and not once has it ever ruined clothes. I can confidently say that this damage wasn't caused by my laundromat."

Everyone but the troublemaker seemed to be convinced. This wasn't a problem we caused, so the other customers wouldn't come away with a bad impression. Now I didn't need to be generous to the ruffian.

"Now, you're obstructing business, so I'm going to turn you over to the guards. I hope you're willing to cooperate."

"Like hell I am!" The man howled and swung his arm at me. It was a reflexive attack without much weight behind it. I twisted out of the way, grabbed the arm, and threw the man over my shoulder. The crowd didn't want to be anywhere near him, so I made sure he landed

away from anyone. He fell on his behind and his leg hit the counter, making a dull sound. The pain from the fall made him cry out and writhe.



“I believe this is justifiable self-defense.”

Not everyone watching was an adventurer, so I decided to leave it at that.

“Fay, can you take care of this?”

“Leave it to me,” he said, and in due time, he had restrained the man and dragged him outside. Now I only needed someone to go call a guard.

I looked at the counter and saw the cleaner slime wiping up the counter. When I threw the man, some mud fell from his shoe. Watching the slime work was somehow soothing. After that, the store returned to regular business and a guard took the man away, quelling the commotion.

“Lunch is ready!” I heard from the kitchen, not realizing it was noon already. When we went to the back of the store, Fina approached.

“Boss, Fay, thank you so much.”

“It’s part of the job,” Fay said. “Besides, I didn’t do much this time. It was all him.”

“I’m the boss, after all. If people like this are coming to my store, I have to do something about it.”

“You sure are strong, Boss!”

“But are you sure you should have done so much laundry for free?”

“It won’t have that great an effect on our sales. The important thing was to show the customers that the man was lying. If they thought we made such a big mistake, we could have lost customers and sales.”

“That’s true,” Carla agreed.

I never believed I could convince all people that my work was perfect. Someone was always going to be dissatisfied, and that was their right. I couldn’t change everyone’s mind, and I didn’t plan on trying. But if they spread their frustration to other customers, that was a problem.

“Next time you’re going to deal with a troublemaker yourself, Boss, please tell us first. I was scared stiff.”

“We didn’t know you were so strong.”

I forgot that I looked like an eleven-year-old from time to time. I never had a chance to display my strength to my employees before this, either. “I’m sorry, I forgot to tell you,” I said. Communication was important.

Despite all that transpired, I managed to replace all the windows in the store with my condensed hardening fluid boards after lunch. A bit before night, I visited Serge’s store on the way home. Now that I

had a medicine slime, I wanted to buy bottles to contain the medicine from the medicine slime, in addition to other items.

“Welcome, Master Ryoma.”

“Hello, Serge. I’m here for some personal shopping today.”

“What do you need?”

“I’d like to buy tons of bottles that I could put medicine in.”

“Tons of them?”

“Yes. I learned to mix medicine from my grandmother, and now that I have some time available, I’d like to make some. There’s always the threat of injury on an adventuring job, so I’d like to prepare for that eventuality.”

“But if you want to buy that many bottles, it would be cheaper to register as a drug store with the merchant’s guild and have them buy the bottles through a wholesaler for you.”

He had a point, so I followed Serge’s advice and decided not to buy bottles at his store. Instead I took more cloth to produce waterproof cloth with, then left.



When I got to the merchant’s guild, I was of course let into the reception room.

“What is it today? Need more employees?”

“No, it’s something else this time.” I explained what I came here for.

“So you want to buy medicine bottles, you say? Just how many talents do you have?” she asked, so I took some antidote out of my Item Box to present as a sample. The guildmaster appraised the bottle and grinned. “Not bad, boy. That’s more than good enough to put on sale. You could run a drug store if you wanted.”

“I’m not planning to for the time being.”

“You’ll be doing well enough for yourself just opening branches for your current business, I’m sure. You can just keep that option in mind, in case you ever need to take it. Maybe if you don’t have the money to open a branch store, you could sell medicine as a side job. I’d buy it all off you, at least.”

“You would?”

“I have a lot of faith in you. Besides, before I got the position I have today, I specialized in medicine. This is a quality product you have here, and with my connections, I’d have any number of places to sell it.”

“I never knew you specialized in medicine. Thank you, I’ll remember your offer.”

I thanked the guildmaster and bought bottles, pots, and funnels for medicine production. On the way to the gate, I also purchased

some food before I headed to the mine. The sun still hadn't set, so I didn't need to use any magic as I ran back, and I ran into many adventurers on the way. They were coming back from a grell frog hunt. They smelled of the swamp, so it was easy to tell. When I was cleaning the pit toilets, I used deodorizing fluid to wash my hands and remove the stench. Maybe that was something I could put up for sale. Earth had deodorizing products too, so I decided that I would go to the store early tomorrow to discuss it with Carme and Carla.



I had dinner early, then spent the rest of the night researching my medicine slime. I lost track of the time and went to sleep late, but it was worth it, as I got the chance to watch my five poison slimes evolve into medicine slimes. My hypothesis was correct, and this confirmed that my other slimes may also have additional evolutionary possibilities. Slimes were deep.

After they evolved, I called it a night and took a drink from Tekun's goblet. I did have one problem with it. While I hated to complain about something I got for free, the energy cost was a bit much. A cup of wine required close to thirty-thousand points of magical energy, according to my status board. Even if my energy were full, I could only produce six cups. But six cups was probably an excessive amount of wine for one night, so for a magical goblet that generated wine from out of nowhere, maybe the high cost was to be expected. It served as a good reminder not to drink too much. I only ever drank socially and never tested my limits, so I stopped after two drinks, then got in bed. The wine was delicious, but I regretted not having any snacks to eat with it. I hoped to rectify that going forward.

Chapter 3 Episode 4: Rumors

I left home in the morning on most days, but I was supposed to come to work later starting today, so I decided to start building my house instead. I went with a standard design; walls that were long horizontally, with windows and a door. I drew a diagram on the ground and updated it as I came up with more ideas. I could set up anything I needed in the mine, so the house only had to be comfortable enough to sleep in.

On the other hand, my store was under constant attack, and I was worried that they might target my home too. But building a secure house would take a while. I could instead continue to live in the mine, and use this new house as a decoy to attract any attackers. The house could block the entrance to the mine so that one had to pass through the building to enter, making it appear that the house was my home. That would buy me time to escape or fight them off.

Traps were also worth considering. Anything too complex would take time to set up, but I could easily have my slimes watch for intruders and splatter them with acid, poison, or sticky fluid. Well, acid or sticky fluid would work, but poison was worthless unless it entered the body. Poison gas would be more efficient if I had any slimes with poison magic, but I didn't just yet. If they could use fire, then a concoction that produced poison smoke would work too, but now my ideas were getting increasingly complicated. I decided to settle on acid or sticky fluid for traps. But I had to actually build the house before I could even start on that.

It seemed best to build something easily repaired in the event that the house was destroyed in an assault. The house had to look legitimate to work as a decoy, but I needed to construct it as soon as possible. A prefab of sorts seemed like the best option. A prefab was a building that had all its parts created in a factory so that they could be simply assembled at the construction site. Little work had to be done on-site, and they were quick to build. When constructing many buildings of the same design, this process also made it easy to come out with mostly identical end results. There were no factories to order parts from and I would have to make them myself, but it would all be easy once that was done. I could make materials of an appropriate size with Create Block, so I figured I could manage something with that.

I cast Create Block and began my experiment by tinkering with

the blocks a bit. I enlarged a brick and put holes in it to make concrete blocks. This much was easy. To stack these and create walls, I would need cement or sticky fluid. Instead, I added more holes to the bottom and bumps to the top. Now the blocks would fit together and be stable enough. I made another one that was shaped like a cube. A single bump wouldn't have been enough, so I put four on the top and made four holes on the bottom. I also sanded the protrusions down to make sure they weren't too sharp and potentially dangerous. That was when I realized I was recreating a popular building block toy. But that matched my goal well enough, and it was at least a good reference point for my design.

I decided to call this new twist on the Create Block spell 'Building Block,' with 'Building Block: Cube' and 'Building Block: Rectangle' variations. Now I could create blocks of either shape as needed. I built a wall out of the blocks as a test, and the weight of the stone made the wall fairly hard to shake. I used magic to turn some dirt into clay, then smeared that all over the wall to make it sturdier. Now it had the appearance and resilience of any average wall, similar to precast concrete. This was If I kept making more parts, my prefab would become a reality. Now seemed like a good time to head to work.



I came in late and asked Carla if there were any problems.

"Good morning, Boss. There are a few things I'd like to report. Firstly, Mr. Smit came this morning."

"And not as a customer?"

"That's right. The men who kicked up a fuss the other day turned out to be tamers with the tamer's guild. Mr. Smit wanted to apologize for the incident."

"He apologized personally? That's embarrassing."

My first time coming into work late, I missed an important visitor. It had been so long since I missed something like this that it almost made me nostalgic. I considered stopping by the tamer's guild now, but he probably had his own business to attend to.

"Who were the culprits? This happened a couple days in a row, right?"

"These men have been tamers for a long time and live meager lives, so when they saw you making so much money as a new tamer who can only use slimes, they were green with envy. They felt that raising a ruckus at the store wasn't much of a crime, so they didn't think much before they did it. Their little grudge will land them a disproportionately large fine and some community service, I'm sure. If you would like to request compensation from the guild, I can reach out to them for negotiations."

There were no damages for me to request compensation over. Taylor himself came by the store, so there was no need to tell him to be more careful from now on either.

“We don’t need money. They should have their own ways to respond to situations like this, so we just need them to follow through with that.”

“I knew you would say that. In accordance with the rules of the tamer’s guild, the culprits will be penalized, and all members of the guild will be informed of their crimes. But there is one other thing I would like your opinion on. There seems to be some criticism of Mr. Smit for taking our side.”

“Not from the culprit? Why?”

“The men who obstructed our business had fairly strong monsters and worked with the guild for a long time. They should have had greater status than they did. They felt that they were unjustly treated and committed these crimes as a result, according to the critics. Unfortunately this framing places us in a bad light. Some customers who heard the rumors have come to us with concerns about our business. I’ve been telling them that we haven’t had any problems and that we’re thankful to Mr. Smit.”

“Is this all incredibly sudden, or is it just me?”

“It does seem like quite the leap to make.”

“I’d like to know more about this.”

“Understood, I’ll have Carme gather information.”

“Please do.”

There were no other reports worth noting, so I checked on the rest of the store, then went off on the first job I could find that day.

“May I have five horned rabbits, please?”

“Here you go! Are you running errands? How nice of you.”

“Something like that,” I laughed. Not that I could do anything about my appearance, but it complicated things.

“Well, if it isn’t Ryoma?” Sieg said when he popped in from his workspace. “I’ve got slime food for you.”

“Thank you, I’ll come check it out as soon as I deliver this,” I said, then thanked him and turned to leave the store for now.

“Oh, can you hold on a second?” he asked.

“What is it?”

“You mind having your slimes clean up my store? My clothes are cleaner than ever, but now I’m starting to notice the smell in here. I clean the place myself every day, of course, but I can’t quite seem to get rid of the stench.”

“Then I’ll bring some deodorizing fluid later. If it’s just the smell that’s the problem, I think that should solve it.”

I returned to my store and got some deodorizing fluid ready. After

closing time that night, I was checking documents when Carme got back.

“Welcome back. Did you figure anything out?”

“Here,” Carme said and handed me a summary. He worked quickly.

“Looks like word about Mr. Smit’s critics has spread pretty far.”

“Yes, there’s some variance in the rumors, but none of them view Mr. Smit favorably. It’s been bothering Glissela of the merchant’s guild too, and she believes that someone may be trying to harm Mr. Smit’s reputation. Mr. Smit seems to be in a delicate position within the guild.”

“Seems like it.”

The documents contained a visual depiction of the power structure within the tamer’s guild, along with a summary of their history. I knew that the tamer’s guild had two schools of thought, but this showed how they had formed into two separate factions. One focused on strong monsters, and they were currently the dominant faction. The other thought that strength was less important than using monsters properly, and sought to live in harmony with monsters. Their school of thought originated with Shiho Jamil’s introduction of taming magic to the world, and her suggestion that a path to peaceful coexistence between man and monster was possible. It would by no means be easy, however. When the advantages of using monsters became apparent, the tamer’s guild gradually diverged from Shiho Jamil’s ideals and continued to hold the same beliefs to this day. As the years passed, fewer and fewer members shared Shiho’s beliefs.

Most jobs from the tamer’s guild involved using monsters for work a human or animal could have done instead. When it came to slaying monsters, there were adventurers who specialized in that. Delivering letters and other small jobs could be done by horses and humans. And if all these jobs could be done without monsters, that meant tamers had to compete for them. Tamers who made their living through the guild sought out monsters that could make their jobs easier. Humans and beastkin, in particular, had short lives, and every time a new pupil replaced their master, the ideals of the old days were further forgotten.

“There are still elves and other long-lived races who have learned and taught Shiho’s ideals all their lives, and their students still inherit her beliefs to an extent. Mr. Smit is one among them, and his high status within the guild has earned him some hate.”

“I see. How much is this related to the obstruction at our store?”

“I can’t say for certain that it’s unrelated.”

“Right,” I agreed. It was possible that my store was never the real target, and it just happened to be convenient for this purpose. “Could

we spread our own rumors? Ours being the truth, of course.”

“The merchant’s guild has a treasure trove of information. There are plenty of merchants on the lookout for the latest news, so it would be easy enough if we spread the rumors through them. What should they say?”

“I actually just recently made a contract with six limour birds, so I’m no longer a tamer who can only use slimes. It looks like some of the criticism is about Mr. Smit favoring someone with no talent, claiming he doesn’t know what he’s doing. I think this would help discredit those rumors. It would show Mr. Smit as someone with a lot of foresight, don’t you think?” I suggested. Limour birds were known for being difficult to form contracts with, after all.

“That should be plenty,” Carme said with a smile. “Then the critics would be the ones who don’t know what they’re talking about. The response should be amusing.”

“Can I ask you not to make it too inflammatory? I don’t need to make more enemies.”

“Understood, I’ll get started on that right away.”

“Oh, hold on a second. It’s night, and we don’t know who we’re dealing with. Bring Fay or Lilyn with you just to be safe. This will be outside their regular hours, so offer to pay overtime. I’ve also been setting up defenses at the mine, so don’t worry about me.”

“Understood, but don’t push yourself too hard,” Carme said before he left the room. I waited for him and Fay to return, then decided to head home to the mountains.

Chapter 3 Episode 5: Spreading Rumors

The next day.

“Good morning. Did something happen?” I asked when I popped into the store and saw people gathered in the kitchen.

“Oh, Boss.”

“Good morning!”

“Look at this.”

The three village girls moved out of the way so I could see what they were looking at. There were plates on the workbench that held piles of sausages. They were linked together across three plates in all. Even if they were to store these sausages, they would take up a lot of space.

“The lady next door wanted to celebrate your contract with the limour birds!”

“She also wanted to thank you for the deodorizing fluid with something better than slime food.”

“Apparently it helped them out a lot. She looked delighted when she left these for us.”

“I see. I must have just missed her.”

“I’ll use these for today’s lunch,” Chelma declared. I didn’t know if she would fry them or put them in soup, but either way, I was looking forward to it. The three girls got back to work after that, so I headed to my office to get a report from Carme.

“It seems our rumors have been doing the rounds.”

“Ours are the whole truth, so it wasn’t that difficult. Now we’ll have to wait and see what happens next.”

“And how has business been?”

“Nothing much has changed. Even the obstructions have stopped. There was a woman who asked if we would put deodorizing fluid on sale, though.”

“Pauline, probably. I can guarantee it’s safe and effective if you think it’s worth selling.”

“There do seem to be people who want it, and it’s not entirely unrelated to our services. I think it’s worth putting up for sale.”

“How much trouble would it be to sell?”

“If we just have to put it in bottles, anyone can do that. Caulkin’s team has been researching a variety of subjects in their free time, I

believe. I'm sure you can ask them to look into it."

"In that case, just to be safe. I'll work with them to make sure there's no danger. If it turns out that there is none, we can sell some of it."

During the time period before lunch was ready, I stayed in the back of the store and worked on plans to sell the deodorizing fluid.



"What to do now?" I asked after lunch, when I had no work left to do. I didn't have much work as it was, and today even that was taken by Caulkin's team so they could train to run new stores in the future. Setting up traps at home seemed more worth my time, so I headed back to the mine. On the way there, I ran into someone.

"Well, if it isn't Ryoma."

"Hello, Asagi. Are you taking the day off?"

"Yes, sometimes you have to give your body a chance to rest. Are you working today?"

"I just ran out of work to do, so I was on the way home."

"Perfect," Asagi said and took a bottle out of his bag. "You have the God of Wine's blessing, I believe? Take this."

"It smells like alcohol. Wait, is this sake?"

"Oh! You know about sake? This is daiginjo from my homeland. It's a type of sake."

"Thank you so much."

"I wanted to share it. I hear that giving alcohol to one blessed by the God of Wine will bring good luck."

"Then I'll pray that it brings you good fortune when I drink it," I said. It had been a while since I'd last had sake, and I was eager to drink it again.



"I'm surprised you know so much about my homeland."

"I heard all about it from my grandparents."

"Is that right?"

"Well, not to change the subject, but where did you get your katana?" I asked. I wanted to avoid any questions that might reveal my history, and I had wondered about this for a while anyway. I had a need to defend myself, so I was hoping to get a proper katana at some point.

"I use goods that are periodically sent from my homeland. Do you want a katana for show, or do you want one to use as a weapon?"

"I'd like one I can use," I said. I was trained in how to handle a katana, but the most common weapons in this country were longswords and other Western-type swords. Even when I went to Tigger's weapon shop before, there were no katanas.

"Unfortunately, you won't find any around here. Your best chance would be to check some stores in the capital. Katanas are weapons of war in my homeland, and prized works of art in the rest of the world. They are the symbol of the samurai, and our very souls. Katanas are exported from my homeland, but they go for a high price. I know your store is quite profitable, but you could go bankrupt buying enough katanas. There have been times where I had to pick up replacements from weapon shops in the capital, and every time I did, I hardly had enough money left to live on."

Asagi went on, "I hear that only select blacksmiths are allowed to learn katana smithing as well. I don't know any katana smiths myself, so you most likely won't get the chance to negotiate personally."

"Is there any way to periodically get katanas for cheap?"

"Perhaps if you became someone's disciple and officially trained in some school of swordsmanship, you could be provided some. It's been known to happen, but unfortunately, I'm still in training myself and cannot take on any disciples. Nor do I know anyone who could."

Asagi left his homeland for training to begin with, and had limited contact with people back home. They were only allowed to rarely exchange letters to tell each other they were safe, and to send gifts such as alcohol. Even when it came to katanas, he was only allowed to get them because of their necessity.

"Where did you learn the ways of the katana, Ryoma? Looking to your school for help would be fastest, I imagine."

"My grandfather forged katanas. I learned from him."

"I see. That would explain why you know so much about products from my village. But in that case, all you can do is buy or trade for an expensive katana."

"All right then, thank you."

“I’m sorry I couldn’t help more,” Asagi apologized, but I didn’t blame him. I thanked him for the rare sake, then we parted ways.

As I left the city and walked down the peaceful road, I wondered if I could make a katana myself. Modern katanas were forged from tamahagane, a type of steel used in many weapons in Japan. Creating tamahagane would require charcoal and iron sand, and I knew how to produce charcoal. Like many Japanese office workers, I dreamed of one day retiring and living a simple life relying on a charcoal fire for warmth more times than I could remember, and charcoal was precious to me during winters in the Forest of Gana. Iron sand would be even more simple to make, with the most key component being black triiron tetraoxide. It had a different structure from the ferric oxide I fed to my metal and iron slimes, but it was still a compound made from iron and oxygen. I could get all the iron oxide I needed from the mine and use alchemy to turn it into the required materials.

I also had all the knowledge I needed, thanks to having a katana smith as my father. I often watched him work when I was young, and he brought me to the smelting furnace on some occasions too. He also made me help when I got old enough, secretly teaching me how to forge a katana. But he determined early on that I had no talent for it, so he gave up on that.

I had the materials and the knowledge, but not the skill. I probably couldn’t make a katana that would work in battle, and even if I could, it wouldn’t happen overnight. I could train under someone if I wanted to take this seriously, but that would take a long time too. Besides, trying to teach myself could be fun. I decided to ask Asagi if there were any regulations about that next time I saw him. With that settled, it occurred to me that I had a different weapon I could use.



As soon as I got back to the mine, I let my familiars roam freely, then searched my Item Box for something I left there ages ago. Eventually, I found the spear I had gotten from Melzen. It was a bit long, but well-crafted and free of rust or deformities. Despite the size, it felt light and couldn’t have been made of iron. I thought it might be blazing ore, but appraising the spear didn’t help me figure it out. I decided to ask someone about that later. In any case, it seemed like it would be a fine weapon. I checked to see if any slimes were nearby and confirmed they were going about business elsewhere, such as my metal slimes rolling down and climbing back up a slight incline for fun. Now I knew it was safe to test the spear. It handled fine, but not as well as I wanted.

The techniques I learned from my father originated from a samurai who survived the Sengoku era. He came from a fairly

illustrious lineage, excelled in combat, and even had some interest in academics. But he wasn't the family's heir, giving him the freedom to live as he pleased. After he either ditched his family or got driven out, he lived a life of destitution for quite some time. He didn't mind it when he was young and energetic, but his mind changed as he aged. He had no money, wife, or children. He had talent, but no fame. When he reflected on his life, he realized he had nothing to leave behind for the world when he passed away, so he decided to pass on his knowledge and techniques. The samurai spent the rest of his life searching for disciples and giving them guidance.

As a samurai from the Sengoku era, his main weapon was a spear. Katanas were only a backup weapon in case one's spear was lost. And because I inherited that samurai's techniques, I could use a spear too. But honestly, I found katanas easier to handle. Maybe that had something to do with the era we now lived in, but it was more likely my father's fault. He taught me to use katanas, spears, clubs, wakizashi, bows, shurikens, chain sickles, and hand-to-hand combat, an addition to a variety of concealed weapons. When he passed on these skills, he prioritized some over others. The ones he valued the most were hand-to-hand combat and katanas. I had to become adept enough with those before he even let me play around with the other weapons, and even later on, I was strictly ordered to spend most of my time training with the katana. This wasn't because he was a katana smith, but because they were the most practical for use in the modern-day. Learning to use weapons was only useful if there was a chance to wield them, but walking around with weapons was illegal in modern Japan. They would even be caught by metal detectors in some places. It was hard to even walk around with a stick without being questioned by the police. But hand-to-hand combat didn't require a weapon, and katanas could still be bought and owned as works of art in the modern-day. They were also shorter than spears or clubs and possible to hide, so I think that was why my father focused on those, but I couldn't say for sure. I never asked him myself, but he tended to see things in a way that defied common sense. But he hid it well, so he was viewed favorably by the public.

"If my katanas were used to kill people, just how well could they kill?" I heard from out of nowhere. It sounded like my father's voice, but nobody was around. I didn't sense anyone either. My familiars were going about their business, so they must not have felt anything was amiss. It seemed like I surprised my limour birds, but that was all. I walked around and found nothing out of the ordinary, so I assumed that I imagined it after thinking about my father.

I should have asked for one of my father's katanas before I was reborn in this world. He always wanted to know how they would

work in practice, but he wouldn't be allowed to make katanas anymore if that ever happened. His personality problems aside, my father dedicated his life to forging the best katanas. He was highly regarded as a katana smith, so he must have been excellent. I wished that I had one of those katanas right now, but it was too late for regrets and it wasn't worth thinking about any further.

As I recalled, this spear was a magic weapon. Filling it with magic energy was supposed to unleash some sort of spell, so I decided to investigate. I experimented with it until fire came out. The spear cast the Ignition spell. I messed around with it some more and found that it could also cast Fireball. The amount of energy I put in didn't seem to have any effect on the output, and any element of energy worked. But using the same element as the spells seemed to be somewhat more cost-efficient.

I kept playing around with Melzen's spear until the sun had set. In the end, it didn't seem to have many useful functions. Magic weapons made it easy to cast spells, but they were inflexible. For someone who couldn't cast spells, it might be useful against a monster for which only magic was effective. But I could cast stronger fire spells of a wider variety on my own, so while this weapon was interesting, it might as well have been an ordinary spear to me. I put the spear back in my Item Box and began to prepare dinner.

Chapter 3 Episode 6: Communicating After Work

A month had passed since we first spread the rumors. The workday ended without a hitch. People left the break room to return to their housing, leaving only me, Caulkin, Tony, and Lobelia.

“You’ve been working here for over a month now. How do you like it? Any problems?”

“It’s the best job ever!”

“You’ve been perfectly hospitable, and I’ve found the work pretty fulfilling.”

“Best of all, the way you use slimes for profit is wonderful!” Caulkin declared, and the other two nodded.

“That’s good. I thought that between all the job training and research, you might be overworked.”

“Don’t worry about us. What about you? We’ve been getting more and more customers, not to mention all those people who want to talk to you. We just got another one today.”

Ever since we publicized that I formed contracts with limour birds, the negative rumors about me and Taylor died down. But in exchange, plenty of people started coming to see me.

“He left surprisingly quickly, though. Who was he, anyway?”

“A middleman for a monster-selling business, I believe. He went on about how limour birds were in high demand and worth a lot whether alive or dead and stuffed, and how he could trade them for something else if you just needed them to send letters. He was just interested in money, and after listening to him for a bit, I asked him to leave.”

Most of these visitors were either here for something like that, or to ask if they could work for me. But I had no intention of selling my limour birds, and I wasn’t going to hire anyone without a letter of recommendation under these circumstances.

“Well, I’m turning down anyone who comes without an appointment. It hasn’t been that big a burden on me, but thanks for asking.”

“It would be a burden on all of us if something happened to you. This is much more comfortable than my research days, and very fulfilling.”

“Much better than when I was a so-called researcher too, yes.”

“I used to have nothing but despair for the future.”

“Despair? Really?”

“You can only question that because you don’t know the tragedy of the slime laboratory. Life was only a bit better than it was in the slums, and we were treated like slaves, if not worse.”

“Seriously?!”

A laboratory didn’t sound like the type of place where such awful treatment would happen. But even with the labor laws in Japan, there were plenty of abusive companies that treated employees like cattle. This world was different, but no matter the place, humans were always the same.

“When you’re assigned to the slime laboratory, the only reason you’d stay with the company is if you have nowhere else to go, or if you have some attachment to the lab like I used to.”

“It became a department for getting rid of employees the bosses didn’t like, so of course the conditions were terrible. Most slaves are guaranteed at least a meager life, but the researchers at the slime lab were guaranteed nothing except their paychecks.”

“It was technically enough to live on, but not enough to buy more than necessities. They would also reduce your pay over the smallest things, to make life even worse. If you ever complained, they just told you to quit, so there was no room for negotiations.”

“Any more details?” I asked. It sounded just like the abusive companies in Japan.

“The most common reason for cutting pay was failing to get results from your research.”

“Learning about slime ecology and methods of taming big slimes were the main goal of the research, but nobody could find anything.”

“Which is why this is where they put people who get demoted.”

“Why couldn’t you discover anything?” I asked. But even with all our scientific advancements on earth, there were animals that weren’t fully understood.

“Firstly, slimes live in many environments and come in too many varieties. If you ever come up with a hypothesis, there will be some type of slime that proves it wrong.”

“There’s also just a lack of information. Other monsters can be dissected for research purposes. Then you can determine from the teeth, for one example, whether the monster is an herbivore or a carnivore. But when slimes die, their body disappears aside from the core, so they can’t be dissected. But there would be no point in dissecting the transparent ones either way, and the cores turn into brittle stone that has no apparent use as any sort of organ.”

Slimes did disappear when they died, but more advanced types did leave a bit of fluid behind. Back when I first came to this world

and killed a slime, I thought that the core it left behind was something like an item drop, assuming that was a real-world concept in this universe. But other monsters didn't disappear and I learned that I would have to cut them apart to harvest their meat and other materials. I sometimes wondered why it was only slimes that vanished, but as I got used to them, I began to focus more on how they evolved. It did seem like this would make them hard to research, however.

"We did see some slimes evolve many times, but we never understood how to make it happen."

"What did they evolve into?"

"A lot of different things, that's all I can tell you. It was different just about every time," Lobelia said with a sigh, trying to remember something. I wondered if something bad happened related to this, but put that aside.

"What did you feed the slime?"

"I don't know, whatever was lying around," Tony said, and the other two nodded.

"We barely received any funding, so it was hard to scrape up any money for slime food. We took leftover monster food from other departments, for the most part. We were only paid enough to keep ourselves alive, so we had to be as cheap as possible. Sometimes researchers even stole meat that was meant for the slimes, so I don't think anyone was going out of their way to buy slime food."

"Slimes will eat anything they're given. That's one thing we did know, so we typically fed them whatever was on hand. They can live in any environment and eat whatever is available, after all."

After hearing what Lobelia and Tony told me, my mouth was agape. Slimes would eat anything if ordered to, though. It sounded like they happened to feed the slimes what they needed to evolve sometimes. But as a result, they failed to notice the importance of food to a slime's evolution. I couldn't help but hold my head in my arms, and when I looked back up again, the three of them were staring at me.

"Boss, what's wrong?" they asked. I wasn't sure what to say, so I decided to get straight to the point.

"The key to making a slime evolve is food."

"Huh?"

"What?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that depending on what a slime eats, they may evolve in different ways," I said, then told them everything I learned about slime evolution in the forest, and that I discovered the conditions to evolve all the slimes I owned. They were shocked to hear this.

“But how could that be?”

“Was the theory wrong?”

“I don’t know what your theory was, but did it say that food and evolution were unrelated?”

“Right. It was an old thesis, but the biggest authorities on monster research agree that food has nothing to do with evolution.”

“I haven’t actually heard of any more recent theses about slimes. In general, our modern perception of slimes is based on old data.”

Questioning established science could be surprisingly difficult. I started my research from virtually no knowledge, so maybe that lack of preconceptions helped. Now Lobelia and Tony were holding their heads in their arms. From their perspective, I was defying common sense. It was probably hard to accept right away. Caulkin, however, remained strangely quiet.

“Caulkin?!” I shouted. He was hanging his head and weeping.

“Boss.”

“Yes?”

He began to speak quietly and monotonously. “What you say makes a lot of sense. When I was at the lab, actually, I was searching for the method of evolving a slime into a big slime. I found that big slimes lived in environments with other powerful monsters, and theorized that feeding the meat of those monsters to a slime would evolve it into a big slime. I saw that nobody else was getting results, so I thought I should come at it from an entirely different perspective.” They assumed that big slimes evolved from slimes, apparently. And from the sound of it, Caulkin got close to achieving his goal. “Like Lobelia said, slime researchers had enough trouble securing food for themselves and could never buy the meat of strong monsters just to feed it to slimes. But I was a noble and had at least some money. I desperately wanted to get some results so they would transfer me to another department, so I hired adventurers to hunt strong monsters that I could feed to slimes. Of course, I also paid the shipping fees for this meat out of my own pocket every day. This went on for around a year before the slime finally evolved. But rather than become a big slime, it evolved into something called a meat slime. Not only did the slime eat meat, but its whole body was made of it.”

“Its whole body?”

“That’s the only way I can describe it. It looked like a writhing blob of raw flesh. I’m sure you can imagine how sickening it was. I was fired from the laboratory shortly after that, and had to sell my house and almost all of my belongings to make up for the money I spent. I couldn’t continue my research after that, but if what you say is correct, it would explain why my slime became a meat slime. I only wish that I had known sooner. Maybe I would have found out myself

if I could have continued my research. Curses!" Caulkin said and began to shed tears again.

I could see why he would be frustrated. If his research had gone on, maybe he could have uncovered at least something about slimes. When I first met Caulkin, Jeff told me that he spent all of his wealth on research, so this must have been what he meant. I decided that someone else would have to manage the money when I put him in charge of a store.

"Don't worry about it, Caulkin! We got hired by this store now!"

"That's right! Now we can do all the slime research we want!"

"Yes, that's true! There's no time for regrets! I should take this as even greater encouragement!"

Lobelia and Tony seemed to cheer Caulkin up, as he soon got ahold of himself, more motivated than ever before. I was glad to see he wasn't too cynical. I happened to know how to tame a big slime too, but bringing that up might have depressed him again. I didn't have the courage to tell him, or the conversational skills to do it without hurting his feelings.

"So what were we talking about?"

"We were telling the boss about the poor conditions at the slime laboratory."

"Oh right, and we got sidetracked talking about the conditions for evolution. Boss, do you have any other questions?"

"What did the slimes at the laboratory tend to evolve into?"

"Well, as far as the types I saw at the lab, there were sticky slimes like the ones you own, but that's all I remember. We theorized they might evolve into big slimes after enough combat training. Most of our work involved capturing slimes and having them fight other monsters until they died. They wouldn't have had time to evolve."

"A long time ago, one of the slimes I used for research evolved into a tree slime."

"I've never heard of those before. What was it like?"

"It was like any old slime at first, but a tree eventually sprouted from its core."

"Like the core was a seed? What happened then?"

"That's it."

"What?"

"The tree kept growing, roots burrowed into the ground, and it became a plain old tree. There still seemed to be a core inside, but it was as immobile as an actual tree."

"Did you find any special use for this slime?"

"Not really, unless you were to cut it down for wood."

"Boss, it's not that easy to find slimes that are useful. The sticky slimes had fluid that worked as an adhesive, but that was about it."

“And we could just use glue for that, so it wasn’t that valuable.”

“When slimes evolved to higher ranks that weren’t big slimes, we considered them failures and tossed them aside.”

It didn’t sound like the researchers had much passion for slimes. Maybe the poor conditions and the lack of future prospects killed their motivation, but I felt like they were too cruel to the slimes. One of my goals in this world was to raise the value of slimes. I didn’t understand why they weren’t more widely used in the first place. They were weak, but even the most basic slimes had countless uses.

“Even weak slimes are great at detecting danger. They’ll know when monsters or thieves are nearby before anyone else. They’re also good for finding water because they search for dew to consume as food. These are both vital to surviving in the wild.”

“Ever since we first met, I’ve felt that you’re pretty compatible with slimes, Boss.”

“Apparently so. I can handle a huge number of them.”

“There’s that too, but I was referring to your capacity to understand them. You can have high compatibility with a familiar, but not in the same way that everyone does. For example, if you got together some tamers who were all compatible with a specific type of monster, not all of them would be equally good at mutually understanding their familiars,” Lobelia said. Some tamers could empathize with their familiars, while some understood them by watching their behavior. “You do need a degree of mutual understanding to be considered compatible, but once in a blue moon, there comes a tamer who can understand monsters as if they were humans. You probably fall into that category. As for me, I can tell when a slime doesn’t like something, but that’s about it.”

“Same here. I can form contracts with them, but I wouldn’t know when they’re afraid or thirsty. They also sometimes stretched out their bodies to carry things for me. Maybe that was an example of some understanding between us.”

“If everyone could understand slimes like you, Boss, then maybe slimes would be a must-have for all tamers.”

Apparently most tamers didn’t understand their familiars like I did. That was likely only in regards to slimes, but that could have been the reason why little research on them was successful. I asked more about the slime laboratory, we talked about other types of slimes we had discovered, and before I knew it, it was the middle of the night.

Chapter 3 Episode 7: A Walk at Night

We talked about slimes late into the night. As I walked home in the dark, I noticed three people behind me. Nobody was ever around here at this time of night. They maintained some distance from me, but followed along at a consistent speed. Their intentions were obvious, but it didn't seem like they were amateurs. Assuming they were a team, they knew how to coordinate. I wouldn't be able to turn back and flee in the other direction without defeating one of them. The path ahead looked empty, but maybe they were prepared to ambush me somewhere. If I continued onward, I would reach the northern gate. City guards would be there, so if I was going to be attacked, it would have to happen before I got there. In that case, I needed to figure this out before I arrived at the gate. I turned right at the next corner, hurried to the following corner, and turned right again, where I heard some voices.

"Did he find out?"

"It didn't look like it."

"Wait, around that corner!"

"Uh oh."

When one of the men shouted, I heard the sound of rough footsteps coming ever closer. I rushed to escape.

"This way!"

I tried to lose them, but they kept up the pursuit. Somehow they always knew my location. Everyone in the area was after me. There were no buildings tall enough that they could have seen me from anywhere in the region, either. I could only think of one place to go.



"Hey, where's the kid?"

"He keeps running. Now he went and hid. Has to be around here somewhere."

"I'm guessing he knows he's being followed, then."

"We would've caught him by now if he didn't. It'll be a hell of a task finding him here."

"What a pain in the ass."

Northeast Gimul wasn't much better than a slum, and it would be hard to call it beautiful. Junk blocked the roads, and cloths acting as awnings lined the streets. The dark of night and my small size made it

harder for them to track me here. They had met up with allies who were waiting to ambush me.

“Thankfully nobody’s around to see us. We’ve got him outnumbered, just scour every—Agh!”

“Take cover! Someone’s firing arrows!”

“*Teleport.*”

“Tch! Over there?!”

“Wait, over here too?!”

“Does he have allies?!”

“*Teleport.*”

By teleporting between the obstacles in the road and firing arrows coated in fast-acting paralytic drugs from my medicine slimes, I got the situation under control in no time.

“Damn, poison arrows?”

“You won’t be able to move for a while. That poison’s pretty powerful.”

“You little brat!”

“What’ve you done?!”

“What do you mean, what have I done? What were you trying to do? What’s your goal?” I asked and pointed my spear at one of the men.

“Hah, don’t expect this to be the last of it. Maybe if you hand over your limour birds and all the money you’ve made, we’ll consider—Yeowch! Hot! Stop it!”

“Why do you think you can talk down to me?” I asked after I launched a fireball from the spear. It didn’t hit him, but the air from the blast was hot enough.

Suddenly, something flew at me, but I knocked it out of the air by reflex. It was a monster that looked like an ordinary owl, but darker in color. It was called a regret owl. Their talons contained poison that oversensitized the nervous system. By digging their sharp talons into the flesh of their enemies, they inflicted wounds that delivered severe pain. They were also nocturnal, so silently hunting for prey in the darkness was their specialty. Their feet and talons were used as materials for medicine, so I could identify this monster right away. But they didn’t live in this ecosystem, so it had to be a familiar. These men must have tried to draw my attention so it could catch me off guard.

“What?! How’d you do that?!”

“I don’t know, I just hit it. I was paying attention to the sky, so I saw it coming.”

The strike broke its wing. The man looked at it lying on the ground and screamed. They must have had some way to see me if they could pursue me so closely, so I suspected there was a familiar

somewhere. I didn't know exactly what it would be, though. Considering that it was dark in color and flew high in the sky, of course I couldn't find it anywhere.

"Hm, there they are."

"You there! Don't move!"

"Guards?!"

"Why are they here so late?!"

"Hey, Ryoma! You all right?!"

"Guildmaster? Why are you here?" I asked. I sent a limour bird to the guards while I was on the run, but that didn't explain why Worgan was here.

"I knew you'd be fine. I saw these guards following a limour bird on my way home, you see," he explained. Presumably he knew it belonged to me and decided to tag along.

"Sorry I worried you."

"I wasn't that worried, to be honest."

"Excuse me, but I'd appreciate it if you could explain what's going on here," a guard said. After that, I went to the guard station to answer questions.



The guard I spoke to was stuffy, but surprisingly upbeat. After telling me not to get myself in trouble again, I thanked him, then left and headed to my store the next morning. I was up late last night to begin with, then there was the attack and the interrogation, and the guard wouldn't let me go home to the mine by myself afterward. I was forced to sleep at the station instead. Not in a cell, thankfully, but a proper room. When they had to hold someone who committed no crimes, they used this ordinary room, apparently. It had a perfectly fine bed as well.

"Good morning!"

"Good morning, Boss. You're certainly early today."

"Did something happen?"

I arrived at the store and found Carla and Lilyn in the break room. I explained what happened last night, and when I got to the part about the attack, Carla interrupted.

"Boss, I expect that this incident is connected to the others. I'll go get the other employees. One moment, please," she said, then left the room. A few minutes later, all the employees gathered in the break room.

"Um, so what are we talking about?"

"We're not getting fired, are we?"

"Don't worry, everyone. Go on, Boss."

When I described the events of last night again, the tension in the

room increased.

“That’s about it,” I concluded. “As you can see, I made it out unharmed, but I suggest that you all go out during daylight hours when the streets are busy. Fay, Lilyn, you might end up with more guard work to do.” Fay and Lilyn nodded to express they understood, so I continued. “In the future, I think we’ll need more guards. When I met with the guildmaster of the adventurer’s guild, he said he had a scheduled meeting with the other guildmasters at the merchant’s guild, and that they would let me join in and consult with them. I’ll be going to the merchant’s guild at noon. I’d like either Carla or Carme to attend me, if you don’t mind.”

“Then I will,” Carla offered. “Carme, you may look after the store.”

“Understood,” Carme said.

“Lastly, I have something to tell you, Chelma.”

“What is it?”

“The guildmaster said he’d like if I brought something we can have for lunch, so I’d like to use the kitchen, if that’s all right with you.”

“That would help me out too. We can cook it together and use some of it for lunch at the store today.”

“That’s all from me, then. I’ll relay the results of the meeting later. If any of you notice something, even the smallest thing, don’t hesitate to report it to me. I think things might start to get hectic again, but thanks for sticking with me!”

As everyone else busily prepared to open the store, Chelma and I got cooking.



“Come in.”

“Excuse me.”

Unlike any previous occasion that I went to the merchant’s guild, I was asked to wait in a separate room for a while, then led to an entirely different room from normal. There was a big, long table at which the guildmasters sat. Carla and I were prompted to sit in the chairs in front of us.

“Now then, I think you know why you were called here today. But first, food!”

“Worgan, seriously?”

“What’s the problem? The meeting’s over. This is a personal gathering. Besides, we can talk while we eat.”

I took the food out of my Item Box and passed it out.

“Guildmaster.”

“Call me by my name here. There’s more than one guildmaster in

the room, it'll get confusing."

"Worgan, then. Here's some sausage soup and bread."

"Oh! Looks good."

"My chef put a lot of work into it. And for you, Glissela, I have this. Taylor, you can have this."

"Oh, I get a hamburger?" Glissela said. "This is like a feast. It seems quite soft, too."

"I got bread with raisins in it, and something crisp like pie crust. These both seem like they'd go well with tea."

Glissela had bad teeth, so she got something soft. Taylor was a light eater, so he got something that could work as teacakes. These were all at Worgan's request, so I hoped they were acceptable.



“Hm, this bread doesn’t smell like seeds.”

“Neither does mine.”

“I made this bread from yeast.”

They were referring to a type of seed that functioned the same as yeast. It was sold on store shelves as Bread Seeds. To use them, you just had to split the seeds open and add their contents to the dough. The simplicity of using and storing these seeds made them the most common method of baking bread. The bread I baked today, however, used natural yeast, as it was called. Yeast itself was just cultivated from a fungus that happened to be ideal for fermentation, though, much like the seeds came naturally from plants. In any case, this type of yeast was produced by adding water to raisins, grains, and the like, and letting it naturally ferment.

“I have more time and money than ever before, and access to more ingredients than I did in the forest, so I can cook things I wouldn’t have been able to in the past.”

The yeast took about a week to make, and it had to be stirred once a day during that time. My work hours were inconsistent and I could be away from home for days at a time back on Earth, so much like making charcoal, this was something I always longed to try in the past. Now it was easy for me to go to town and get all the tools and ingredients I needed. My business made more than enough for everything, even factoring in our emergency funds and the paychecks for my employees, and as the boss, I had the privilege of leaving home on time every day. I had no reason not to dabble in making yeast now. I also bought materials for researching the effects and composition of my drugs with reagents. My life was changing slowly but surely. Unlike on Earth, my days consisted of more than commuting to the office, working, and commuting back home again.

“What are you smiling about? For having just been attacked yesterday, you’re awfully jolly.”

“I’m happy for unrelated reasons.”

“Yeesh.”

“Judging by this, though, there doesn’t seem to be a problem.”

“What problem would there have been?” I asked.

“They want to know what you were thinking walking home by yourself at night without help. I told them there was nothing to worry about.”

“Maybe you can say that now, Worgan. We weren’t there to see Ryoma.”

“We could have offered assistance, but if he doesn’t want it, that would be unnecessarily intrusive.”

“Anyway, these two were freaked out about what happened to

you last night. They were worried you might even close up shop.”

“Well, with all the danger afoot, I at least want to know you feel about it, Ryoma.”

“I thought you’d at least be somewhat distressed.”

“I’ve come this far with the help of a lot of people. It would be awfully selfish of me to give up after being attacked. Besides, I have employees to look after. If I closed up shop, some of them would end up on the streets. Anyway, what I’m here to discuss is what I should do next,” I explained.

“Fine, fine.” Glissela said with an astounded smile. “Then let’s get to the point. Ryoma, bolster your defenses and stay put for a little while longer. Then we can take care of this.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that in due time, there won’t be any more attackers.”

“Ever since the criticism against us began to spread around, we started our own independent investigation. We’ve discovered who spread the rumors and instigated the crimes, but unfortunately, we lost track of them yesterday. We’ve expanded our search radius, but first we received information that you had been attacked.”

“Also, the guys who attacked you last night only just arrived in town two days ago. Someone told them about your cash and limour birds. I suspect that it was the same person we had our eyes on.”

“Are we sure?”

“It’s highly likely. The person who spread the rumors and ran away knows how we’re connected. If they target you, they probably think that we can’t send too many people to pursue them, since we need some folks around to protect you.”

“When the duke’s family asks you to look after someone, you have to put the utmost effort into it. You never know what might happen.”

“So you think they had me attacked so it’d be easier for them to get away?”

“That’s how it seems to us, but the suspect has disappeared without a trace. I don’t expect them to come back, and if they do, they would try to do so as discreetly as possible. Maybe they’re in no position to try that, but in any case, we’re not going to give up the chase that easily. You’re no ordinary kid, Ryoma, and I think you’re more than capable of defending yourself. We want you to do everything you can to protect yourself and your store on your own. We’ll take care of the culprit.”

“We already formed a search party out of Welanna’s party, Miya, Jeff, and Leipin the space magic-user. They’re on the culprit’s tail.”

“But the culprit knows their way around those roads, so there’s no guarantee we’ll catch them. Anyway, Ryoma, you’ve been silent for a while. Are you all right?” Glissela asked. I thought about it for a bit.

“My first priority is to do everything I can to defend my store, I suppose.”

“Don’t worry too much, I didn’t say I wouldn’t help at all. I talked to Gordon and Sher about it. They’re not fit for a search party, but they do have some talent, and they’re well-regarded in town. They should be ideal for guarding the store. Jeff also suggested a guy he trusts. He’s not with the guild, though, so I can’t vouch for him.”

That meant I at least had Fay, Lilyn, and those two adventurers. I didn’t know the person Jeff recommended, but I couldn’t imagine he would suggest someone weak. It would have to be put on hold for now, but expanding our store security to some extent was a good idea.

“Carla, assuming we’re also working with the city guards, what do you think about hiring them?” I asked.

“We don’t know how many men we’re up against, so it’s hard to say what we need. Considering the size of the store, though, that should be enough. But won’t you need bodyguards for going out, Boss?”

That wouldn’t be necessary. Bodyguards would be more disadvantageous than not, if anything. In the event that I was unable to defeat an opponent, my best option would be to flee, but if someone else were present, it would complicate matters. I wouldn’t be able to bring them along with space magic, but it would be hard to leave them behind too. If I was going to consider leaving them behind, it would have been better to either fight by myself or run away in the first place.

“I assume we’re up against humans?”

“They may be able to use familiars, but generally humans, yes.”

“Then I’ll be better off on my own,” I said. Earth didn’t have monsters, so all of my combat skills were meant for human opponents. I was most used to fighting my own kind. “I used to train all the time with my grandfather, so I’m best against humans or humanoid monsters.”

“You also seem to have a decent track record with that so far.”

“Worgan assures us that you can fight.”

“Don’t worry about it, I’ve got a better eye for combat talent than you two.”

We went on to discuss specific defense plans and what should be done following an attack. Lastly, Taylor handed me two documents.

“‘This recognizes that Ryoma has the talent to handle slimes and limour birds.’ What is this?”

“That one’s proof that I think you can use familiars perfectly well. This one is a pledge stating that while your store uses monsters, its transactions are under the jurisdiction of the merchant’s guild.”

Guild cards already existed to use as proof, so these documents

were apparently seldom produced. But they did have Taylor's signature, so maybe they would come in handy at some point. I wondered if Taylor might blame himself for getting me wrapped up in this incident.

Chapter 3 Episode 8: Changes After The Meeting

~???’s Side~

One Month Later

It was midnight, and most were asleep. In one corner of Gimul, men screamed and shouted.

“Run away! We can’t take him!”

“Damn brat—Gwaaaaah!”

“You fools! I said run away, not toward him!”

The men had come to attack Ryoma, but they were instantly subdued by his counterattack. The leader determined they couldn’t win and gave orders to the three men who were still standing, but they were too frenzied to pay attention. As a consequence of ignoring orders, their arms and legs were broken, their jaws were shattered, and they lost consciousness.

“Wait, I surrender! I’ll never bother you again!”

“I’m sorry, but I can’t buy that. All the ones who came before you did the same, so I hope you understand.” Ryoma approached the begging man faster than the eye could see and knocked him out with a punch. “That takes care of that.” He looked around and gazed at the thirteen unconscious or wailing men.

“It’s been a while since they last showed up,” he muttered. A few seconds later, four men ran toward him. They were city guards.

“What happened here?! Oh, it’s you, Ryoma. Are these today’s criminals?”

“Yes. Thanks as always.”

“Of course. Tie up anyone who isn’t heavily injured! As for the wounded, can you handle them, Ryoma?”

“Sure.”

“Make it quick.”

“Understood.”

Ryoma sent out one of his healing slimes to cast High Heal on the men’s limbs, handing them over to the guards to be restrained once he was done.

“That’s seven today, with twelve bones in total. This looks like it’ll be expensive.”

“One High Heal costs a thousand sute, and it takes six High Heals to cure one bone, so that’ll be seventy-two-thousand sute in all. I’ll cut the price a little for an even seventy-thousand sute,” Ryoma said. The guard’s face twitched.

“I know that it’s necessary, but that’s a frightful amount.”

“If they would stop attacking me, I wouldn’t have to do this.”

“Anyway, come to the station so you can be paid.”

“Understood.”

Ever since Ryoma was first attacked over his business, he was targeted by everyone from incited thugs to muggers who only wanted his money. An increasing number of them were taking these direct measures, but all the attacks ended in failure. Each time they did, Ryoma politely healed the attackers, then charged them a high price for it. The laws of this country stated that injuries could be inflicted as an act of self-defense. The attackers had no right to complain, and Ryoma didn’t have to do anything about their wounds. But if they did heal them, he had the right to charge a fair fee for the treatment. Beating up on someone and making them pay for the recovery sounded like extortion, but if it was done as self-defense, the laws of this world made it just barely legal. Ryoma disapproved of the idea at first, but it increased the amount of risk for the attackers and allowed Ryoma to expand his security. It also set an example, but it was after Glissela convinced him that this would be the quickest way to get the situation under control that Ryoma decided it was necessary.

Ryoma looked like a child, after all, and it was hard to present himself as a threat. Convincing them of the danger through his actions was his best option. It was similar to how businesses would put up signs that claimed security cameras were rolling back on Earth. This was a bit violent by comparison, but by hurting both their bodies and their pocketbooks, Ryoma reduced the number of attacks.

“Here’s today’s payment. Seventy-thousand sute, count it to be sure.”

“Looks right. Thank you.”

“Don’t worry about it, it hardly hurts our budget, and we’ll be having these fellows pay us back for it later. Besides, sometimes the forced labor they go through when they can’t pay for it ends up reforming them, so it’s not all bad.”

“Thank you, that makes me feel better about it,” Ryoma said, then left the station. Other guards greeted him on his way out. The attacks had become such a common occurrence that Ryoma had come to know some of the guards. He waved back at them as he returned home.



The next morning, Ryoma came down to his store and found Carla at the front desk.

“Good morning, Carla. How was last night?”

“Good morning, Boss. We weren’t attacked last night either. What about you?”

“Thirteen of them came for me. Here’s the money from it. I’ll put it in the safe, you can take it to our account at the guild along with our sales revenue.”

“As you wish.”

As Carla continued her preparations, Ryoma walked past her and further into the store. He greeted the other employees busily running about, then entered the break room to get out of their way. There he was given a report about the store’s defenses.

There were five employees currently assigned to guard duty. In addition to Fay and Lilyn, there were adventurers named Gordon and Sher, plus a man from the slums named Dolce who was hired at Jeff’s recommendation. He was once part of a vigilante group in the slums. Fay and Lilyn captured the occasional ruffian at the store prior to the attacks, but after the late-night assaults on the store began, they began to make use of the skills they honed as assassins in earnest. Gordon and Sher were talented enough to be worth their recommendation from Worgan. On top of that, when they were put on watch duty out front, they got a lot of positive buzz. For example, Gordon knew not only adventurers and ordinary civilians, but a lot of rowdy sorts of men, and when fights started over simple things like bumping shoulders, he could get them under control right away. Sher was polite and good with people, and especially popular with middle-aged and elderly women. Dolce looked vulgar and spoke little, but got along with coworkers and took his job seriously. Thanks to their service, the store was safe from attacks. If there was ever any damage, it was nothing more than some cracks in the doors or windows from the hoodlums trying to force their way through, and all that cost to repair was some materials and magical energy. The repair fee was collected from the hoodlums as a fine, and since the store was built for next to nothing just by using magic, Ryoma hardly considered this any sort of damage. Rather, the attacks came as an unexpected source of income.

“All right! I’m a criminal adventurer! I’m starting to raise a ruckus!” Ryoma yelled. They had gone to an empty lot where he created a wall. On the other side of a counter also created with magic, the three village girls were holding transparent shields. They shouted for Dolce, who approached with a polearm. Ryoma saw him coming and fled with a fake scream. Balls came flying at his back, but he nimbly dodged them and gained some distance.

“All right, looking good!” Ryoma said. His acting made it look like a little skit, but he was training them to defend the store. When there were dangerous customers, non-combatants were supposed to swiftly pick up the shields, call someone, and run away. Fighters were trained to immediately respond to requests for aid. Fleeing criminals weren’t to be pursued too far, but paintballs were supposed to be thrown at them. Ryoma previously asked the five guards for their opinion on how other employees should act in these situations, then tested a few products based on anticrime goods from Japan.

“Dolce, what do you think?”

“They didn’t get in the way. Sir.”

“Seems like we’re good, then! Don’t forget, this is the way to do it!”

“Boss, I’m told that lunch is ready.”

“Thank you, Carme. Then let’s clean up and go eat.”

After working on his store’s defenses, Ryoma began to spend more time at the store. Now he was there from morning until late at night again. He did work, but not all of his time at the store was spent on that. His free time was used to mingle with his employees and customers. While Fay and Lilyn were accustomed to violence, the civilian employees had their concerns. He made self-defense tools for them and strived to make them feel as safe as possible. His efforts weren’t in vain, as there was no noticeable chaos or requests to quit. Ryoma and the employees had more personal conversations now too, and grew closer as coworkers. When they headed to the break room, this newfound camaraderie expressed itself.

“Hey, how was the training?”

“We started eating already.”

Ryoma sat next to Gordon and Sher in the break room and reached for a piece of bread.

“This bread seems fluffier than usual.”

“Fina and I used that natural yeast you taught me about to make bread with glenberries. It made some delicious, puffy bread.”

“Those small red berries? Oh, now that I take a close look, I see some pink.”

“It’s interesting how yeast gives you different results with different materials. You don’t have to deal with processing seeds, either.”

“Yeah, the bread takes a long time to make, but it’s easy to use.”

“Those seed husks are such a pain! Some bits of it always end up in the bread!”

“And it’s never tasty when that happens.”

“But if you’re careful when you’re making it, it can be dangerous.”

“Really? Shouldn’t try it at home, then?”

“It’s not hard in itself, but you need to sterilize the container and a few other things. But Gordon, I didn’t know you cooked.”

“Well, I don’t, but the violence is dying down and all. My contract’s gonna be over soon, which means I won’t be able to eat here anymore.”

“Chelma’s lunches are just so good. I don’t even have to think about what to eat.”

“I love it.”

“Oh, I’m not that special. One moment, the meat is ready. I cooked it with charcoal, I think it’s called? I got it from the boss. It came out wonderfully.”

Pleased by the praise, Chelma left the break room. When she next appeared, she was holding a dish stacked with meat. Ryoma and his employees enjoyed each other’s company safe from danger, despite the endeavors of the criminals.

Chapter 3 Episode 9: Departure

~Ryoma's Side~

After we enjoyed some delicious bread and charcoal-grilled meat, Carla called out to me.

“Boss, I’d like to discuss the matter of opening a second store.”

“What about it?”

“I’ll get straight to the point. Our sales and the treatment fees from the attackers have given us ample funds, so isn’t it about time to get to work on that?”

“Already? Shouldn’t we give the staff more time to learn how to run the business?”

“You have a point, but Caulkin’s team were once researchers, so their reading, writing, and math skills were fine from the start. Normally they would also have to learn to haggle with customers and negotiate with other companies, but we have no competition in this industry. Instead, Carme and I have prioritized teaching them how to handle problems as they arise. They’ve also learned to leave records in an account book, so now I believe that gaining experience on the job would be the quickest path forward.”

“So you don’t just want to open a branch store for more income? It could be used to train new management?”

“Correct. Of course, Carme or I will have to work there temporarily and offer guidance until it looks like they can handle the store on their own. There’s also one more thing,” Carla said and handed me a document. It contained a summary of all our income and expenditures thus far, but after that, there were predictions for our income and expenditures as well. The predictions looked like they had been rewritten multiple times, and they were listed across several pages. Judging by the ink and the texture of the paper, it seemed like this was written a while ago. I spread the word about my store all over the place when we first opened, presumably explaining the big difference between the predicted numbers and the actual numbers. They also calculated the predicted sales with a predicted number of customers, presumably based on the fluctuations in customers in other industries.

“Did you collect all this information for our future business plans?”

“You’re very perceptive. We’re currently the only business that

provides laundry as our main service. This is a highly unusual case. There's little information for us to go on, so we've had to change up our approach as we went along. We've had more sales and customers than predicted, and we want to ensure we take advantage of that. Our predictions were off in a good way, thankfully, but it doesn't change the fact that we're left with little idea as to where to go from here. If we were to open another store from which to gather more information, we could make more accurate predictions to use for our business plans."

Even before we hired Caulkin's team, we had enough employees to run the store somehow. Everyone has gotten used to their jobs by this point too. And Caulkin's team wouldn't have to run everything right away, so this would be fine for their training. The attacks were also becoming less frequent, the store had guards, and I could go out by myself without any issues.

If we wanted this store to continue its operations into the future, it would also be good to have somewhere else to hold my increasing number of cleaner slimes. I would have loved to take all the excess slimes myself, but I didn't know exactly how many slimes I could form a contract with. There was no limit in sight, but I didn't know if that would last forever. Considering that, having more stores and more tamers would return some benefits aside from money. For those reasons, I did think that expanding this store into a full franchise would be a good idea. It would at least be better than needing to slaughter our extra cleaner slimes if we ended up with too much. That wasn't likely to be a problem any time soon, but maybe I needed to take care of it. I still didn't see myself as a business owner so much as one of the employees, but these challenges were going to arise whether I liked it or not. Our job was to deal with them before time was up, no matter what it took. Thankfully I had Carla and Carme to help me.

"Understood, then let's work on opening a second store," I said. "Should I be the one to decide on the city and secure the land to build it on?"

"Will you do that for us?"

Carla gave advice from experience and I offered my own ideas. We discussed it for a while until we reached an agreement.

"Thank you for understanding," she said with a smile. "It's a pleasure working with you."

"You take care of the employees that'll work at the branch store, then. I'll go to the guild and ask them some questions."



"Welcome," the guildmaster said as I arrived.

“Thanks for the help, as always. I’d like to ask about opening a second store.”

“Finally up for it, are you? I’ve already got some cities to suggest. Derma, Azul, Sikum, Zillman, Lufes, and some others too.”

It was going to be our first branch store, so I wanted something close to Gimul so I could travel back and forth quickly.

“You’d like something nearby, I’m sure. I have some suggestions like that as well.”

She must have gotten to know me somewhat by this point.

“Thank you.”

“At any rate, the closest cities I would recommend are Shuchiro, Haken, and Lenaf. The closest of those would be Lenaf.”

“Can I buy land there?” I asked. The guildmaster grinned.

“I’ve got some ready for you. Nothing as big as your current store’s built on, though.”

The land she introduced me to was about half as large as what my first store had, but it was near the center of the city and came with a building that would be perfectly usable. I looked at the floor plan as Glissela told me about how it was once a general store and had a storage room as well, so it wouldn’t take long to remodel it for my purposes. Even if I wanted a different building, I could just tear this one down and construct something else in its place.

“This is near Pioro’s store. I had him check the building out, and he says it’s nice and sturdy. You’ll have to get the paperwork done with the guild in their town, though.”

“I see, thank you. I’ll buy this land, then.”

Thus, my new store was soon to be realized. Knowing experts and cooperators who I could trust made matters quick. I went straight back to my store and reported my discussion at the guild to Carla and Carme. After that, I told Caulkin’s team about the branch store and made them promise not to give my cleaner slimes to anyone else. I said the same thing when they made work contracts with me at the guild, but I reminded them just to be certain. They didn’t hesitate to tell me they understood.

Later that night, I left the store early and stopped by Serge’s store on the way home. I told him that I would be in Lenaf for a while to prepare for my second store’s opening, took tons of cloth, and left. Tomorrow I would have to start getting ready for the journey, but I wanted to create as many waterproof cloths as possible throughout my preparations so they wouldn’t run out of stock. Serge told me that they were producing an increasing number of products from the waterproof cloth and they were selling well, mainly among adventurers and traveling merchants. A lot of adventurers needed to travel light so they could move quickly, so wanted goods that were as

lightweight as possible.

Most of the merchants who bought the waterproof cloth used carriages that didn't have a roof or canopy, and they used the cloth to protect their wares from rain. Leather covers already existed, but ones large enough to cover a carriage were heavy, put a greater burden on the horses, and took up space, whereas the waterproof cloths reduced the weight. A heavier carriage made it harder to flee from monsters or thieves. Wearing out a horse too soon and needing to buy a new one would also significantly decrease profits. Not only that, but an unspoken understanding among merchants was that horses were their business partner, and those merchants who didn't care for their horses were considered failures. The waterproof clothes took up little space, didn't weigh much, and were remarkably effective as covers, so many merchants bought them as replacements. I decided to give my sticky slimes a lot of food so they would multiply faster. There would be a need to increase the production of waterproof cloth in the future, and I wanted to reduce the workload for individual slimes. I thought about it as I returned home.



Four days had passed since then. I had others look after the store as I made time for my own preparations. At the same time, we tried changing up our operations a bit. For one of the changes, I took this opening of a new store as an opportunity to make a company logo. It was a picture of a bag, bamboo, a slime, and the name Bamboo Forest. A craftsman who worked with Serge's business created a branding iron for us, and we used it to make new bags adorned with the logo. The new store would use these bags from the start, whereas our store in Gimul would allow customers to exchange their old bags for the new ones.

Second, we decided that the store would have days off in the future. The employees took turns taking breaks up to this point, but that made it difficult for employees to meet up outside the store. The plan was to put a sign or something outside the store to inform customers that this change would be implemented in about a month. Throughout that month, we would also offer trade-ins for old bags.

Third, we were going to change how cleaner slimes were managed. Caulkin's team were all going to the new store, so the store in Gimul would temporarily have no other tamers. That would mean I couldn't go on any excursions, but that wouldn't do. Maria, one of the village girls, actually spent the last two months learning taming magic. From what she told me, her grandmother was a magician. She died when Maria was young and never got the chance to teach her magic, but she had plenty of magical energy.

One day, after we had started talking more, I suggested that she try taming magic. After that, she trained under Lobelia on her days off until she could successfully form contracts with slimes. As such, I could leave slime management to Maria or Caulkin's team in the future, and I could have them take in slimes after I couldn't make contracts with anymore. With that said, I still wasn't sure I had any limit on contracts. What I heard about the creator of taming magic, another traveler from Earth, was that she had no such limits, because that was her specialty. I decided that would be a good question to ask the gods later.

I went out to the front of the store, where my employees had all gathered to see me off. Once they wished me goodbye, I walked to the city gate, basking under the morning sun and the refreshing blue sky. Then I ran straight down the paved road. This would be my first solo journey since I came to this world.

Chapter 3 Episode 10: To Lenaf

It was three days to Lenaf by carriage, with stops at four small villages. I heard the city wasn't as big as Gimul, but still reasonably large. The journey would normally take three days at the quickest, but thanks to my teleportation magic and energy meditation, I expected the travel time to be greatly reduced. I would generally train by using the Warp spell to move all throughout my travels, but I decided I should have some amount of magical energy leftover, so I enhanced myself with energy meditation and ran the remaining distance. I could recover my magical energy in the meantime, allowing me to move at a pace no normal person could ever emulate. I considered taking it slow and fighting monsters along the way, but the monsters in the area were so weak that I wouldn't even need magic or energy meditation for them.

For these past two months of traveling anywhere that I could return home from within a day, I already knew as much. But somewhat powerful monsters had supposedly appeared around Lenaf as of late, so if I hurried, maybe I could fight those. Glissela also asked me to deliver something to Pioro. I planned to say hello to him anyway, so I accepted the request and figured it should be taken care of sooner than later, hence using my physical and magical energy to move as fast as possible. I passed through the forest and crossed the plains, reaching the fourth of the villages between Gimul and Lenaf by the time the sun began to set. It seemed like a good place to stop for the day, so I walked to the side of the road and activated my Dimension Home, then began to prepare dinner with items inside it.

I bought a few portable foods from a store in Gimul before I departed, out of curiosity. I wanted to see what on-the-go food from this world tasted like. I started with a thin, rectangular board that reminded me of a cookie. It was nice and crunchy, but tasted like flour. It wasn't especially good, but it wasn't that bad either. I drank a glass of water I produced with water magic, then ate a yellow block that was shaped like a die. It was hard, but not so much as to be unchewable. It was like a cracker, but the thickness made it especially tough to bite through. Next, there was some dried meat. It was extremely salty, and only became more so the more I bit into it. I tasted nothing but salt. Ultimately I gave up on eating it because it seemed unhealthy.

Finally, there was some green bread that also seemed hard. Apparently, it had hardened in the time I had been traveling. It was solid as a rock, but the lady at the store said not to soak it in any fluid. That would give it an unpalatable flavor and waste it completely, according to her. I tried giving it a bite, only to be met with pain. I couldn't even sink my teeth into it, so I was left no choice but to enhance my jaw with energy meditation.



When I tried again, I managed to bite the bread, but it had no flavor. Or so I thought at first, but then the terrible taste set in and I began to cough. I frantically gulped down a glass of water, but it wasn't enough and I ended up drinking an entire second glass. It tasted something like grass, or maybe some sort of medicinal herb. It seemed like a mix of a few things, so it was hard to tell. It mixed with my saliva as I bit into it, though, and the grassy smell and bitter, tart, pungent flavor spread through my mouth. It was just vile. The dried meat that I got from Hughes was decent enough, but aside from that, I shouldn't have just bought these snacks out of curiosity. Maybe I would try the other ones a second time, but not the green stuff. I chomped on a piece of fruit to cleanse my palette. Thankfully I had kept that in my Item Box.

The shocking flavor made me lose my appetite, so I had only that one piece of fruit for dinner, then slept in my Dimension Home. I would have to be careful of my surroundings when I got back out, but it was nice to not need a tent.



I was safe throughout the night, then began to travel the same way the next morning. By that afternoon, I could see the walls around Lenaf in the distance. My first order of business when I entered the city was to visit Pioro's store. I took the time to enter my Dimension Home and wash off the sweat and grime from the journey. Once my cleaner slime bath was finished, I left my Dimension Home and headed to the city gate. Much like in Gimul, I just had to show my guild card to pass.

I asked the man at the gate for the location of the Saionji Company as well, and he said to walk straight onward past the east gate I entered through until I hit a dead end, then turn right. I thanked him and followed his directions through the wide streets until I saw a building with tall, sturdy walls. Many people were carrying luggage in and out of it. I didn't know what this building was for, but this was the dead end.

I walked right for a while and found a sign that said 'Saionji Company.' It was on a corner with a butcher, general store, fish market, dried and preserved foods store, spice shop, and more, all of which had signs for the Saionji Company. There was even a deli, though it was on the smaller side. I didn't know where to go, so I decided to enter the spice shop and ask them. I picked the spice shop because I didn't have an appointment anywhere and it had the fewest customers, so I would be getting in the way the least. The high price of spices was likely the reason they were so empty. There wasn't even

a single customer, conveniently.

I was welcomed when I entered the spice shop, but I didn't see who welcomed me. I turned to look where the voice came from and saw a young girl behind a counter. She was probably around the same age as me and Elia. She had long, blonde hair, white skin, and what appeared to be fox ears. I didn't know if it was because she'd been working, but her hair was somewhat disheveled. She tried to pat it down as she came out from behind the counter.

"What do you need today?" she asked.

"I'm sorry, but I'm not a customer. I have a delivery for Mr. Pioro Saionji from the merchant's guild in Gimul."

"What, for Dad? Thanks."

"Excuse me, but are you Pioro's daughter?"

"You know my dad?"

"Yes, we met some time ago."

"Really? Sorry I didn't introduce myself. I'm Pioro Saionji's daughter, Miyabi Saionji. Nice to meet you."

"I'm Ryoma Takebayashi. It's a pleasure to meet you too."

"Ryoma? I think I've heard that name before. Anyway, come on back here."

Miyabi guided me through a hallway behind the spice shop until we came to a reception room. Shortly after she left, she came back with Pioro.

"Ryoma, it's been two months! What, you came to Lenaf?"

"It's nice to see you again, Pioro. I only just got to town. I'm here to open a new branch store."

"In this city? Then I can take you to the local merchant's guild."

"Before that, I have something for you."

I took a parcel out of my Item Box and handed it to Pioro.

"Huh, what's this?"

"I couldn't tell you what's inside."

"Yeah?"

Pioro opened the parcel. It contained a letter which Pioro read. He nodded and put the letter away.

"Ryoma, sounds like you've been through a lot lately."

"Was it about me?"

"Just a bit about you at the end. Gli says to give you a hand, but I would've done that anyway."

"Thank you."

"It's nothing, nothing at all. Let me introduce you to my daughter. She's a year older than you, but you should get along swell."

Now that the topic of discussion turned to her, Miyabi spoke up.

"Dad, c'mon. My name's Miyabi, you should tell people my name when you're introducing me. I even told him that much already."

“Oh really? What’s the problem? Miyabi was also the name of the daughter of the founder of the Saionji Company. I named you after our ancestor.”

“Nobody was talking about that, Dad! Why are you bringing it up?!”

“Did that ancestor have some great accomplishment?” I asked, wondering what comedy routine he was trying to ape.

“Not that I’ve heard. She was just a pretty face to draw customers, then she got married, and she passed away peacefully with her family around her at the end of her life.”

“I see. So you want her to live a happy life like her ancestor?”

“No, no. Miyabi’s father was the founder, you see, and Miyabi’s father is me. I’m hoping that gives me the same luck as the founder!”

“You named her Miyabi for yourself?!” I couldn’t help but shout. “Uh, sorry I raised my voice.”

“No problem. That was a fine response, really. My daughter won’t even respond to my joking around lately, so that’s just what I needed.”

That reminded me of a boss I had who would joke around all the time when we were busy with work. Sometimes I would respond because he wasted more time if I didn’t, but I generally tried to ignore him, and that made him extremely upset. But I didn’t want to think about my old life too much, so I pushed that aside and went with Piro to the merchant’s guild. He led me to the tall building I passed on the way to the Saionji Company. This was my second time seeing it, but its size was no less impressive. The walls could almost be compared to that of a fortress. I followed Piro inside, where it looked like a castle.

“What do you think of this merchant’s guild? Incredible, huh?” Piro asked me in the reception room.

“I’d say so. It looked like a fortress from the outside.”

“Makes sense, since there used to be one here.”

“There was?”

“You bet. There was a war a long time ago where this was the location of an army’s base. This city was built around the remains of that fortress, which was also used as the basis for this building when it was constructed.”

“I see.”

“There’s one other reason the building was made like this. Take a look out that window,” Piro said and pointed outside, though the window was made of beautiful glass and hard to see through.

“Wow, I’ve never seen so many big monsters.”

Outside the window, there were many monsters. There were bird monsters ranging from medium to large, and even dragons that I assumed were wyverns. Some had saddles as if they were horses, and

people rode on their backs. This never felt more like a fantasy world.

“All these monsters are here just to transport goods and people.”

“All of them?!”

“Flying monsters make it possible to transport goods that spoil quickly, and in large numbers. But we need a place for the monsters to land and unload the goods, among other things. A fortress happened to be a good example to follow for a building that would have all these facilities.”

“I see.”

“And the one who came up with this idea for using these monsters to transport goods, the one who oversaw the construction of this city, and the one who invented and named this ‘airport’ was the founder of the Saionji Company? Pretty smart guy, eh?”

Obviously I knew that he didn’t come up with the name, but I couldn’t say that. If someone else from Earth ever happened to come to my store, they might point out that nothing I came up with was original either. Pioro and Miyabi’s accents and behavior retained traces of someone from Kansai, so I had to imagine that the founder was from Japan.

“An airport? Port towns are sure full of interesting things.”

“Right? You get it!” Pioro said and jovially patted me on the back, then a woman who worked for the guild came to the reception room and we began to discuss business. I was the first to bring up that I wanted to buy a store. The woman was a bit surprised, but I went through the procedures smoothly enough. Pioro checked out the store in advance, so the guild was able to hand it over quickly. After that, we went to my newly purchased store to take a look inside.

It was a two-story building. The first floor had a storage room and space for doing business, while the second floor had a reception room and an office. The house that the previous owner lived in was also attached to the back, and that came with my purchase. Aside from the living room and other shared spaces, there were five empty rooms that could be used as lodging. I couldn’t give every employee their own room, but two or three people to a room was apparently normal, so it would probably be fine.

“Any problems?” Pioro asked.

“No. This looks like it should be usable as soon as I make the shelves and furniture. Contacting my people in Gimul will take three days at least, and I’ll be able to make arrangements for my employees to come in five days at the latest,” I said as I took a limour bird out of my Dimension Home so I could send a message. “Are you ready, Drei?”

I named this limour bird Drei, meaning ‘three’ in German. Elia sent me a letter saying she named her limour birds, so I decided to do

the same. I also named my slimes back when I first started getting them, but I had so many that at some point I couldn't keep track of them all. The effects of the taming contracts made it possible for me to tell them apart anyway, so it had been a long time since I felt the need to name my monsters. My nightmare bird was named Eins, meaning 'one,' and the other four were named Zwei, Vier, Fünf, and Sechs, meaning 'two,' 'four,' 'five,' and 'six.' Elia said she named hers after music terminology.

"Golly, you really made contracts with limour birds, huh?" Pioro said as he observed Drei. I took writing tools out of my Item Box to write a letter in the meantime. When I previously linked my senses to the limour bird's and let it fly off, the way the scenery rushed by brought to mind memories of riding the bullet train. Assuming this was the same speed, Drei was going at somewhere from two-hundred to three-hundred kilometers per hour. It would be fast enough flying normally, but it used wind magic to create gusts that dramatically raised its speed. Limour birds could travel a three-day distance by carriage like it was nothing. Even if it had to take some detours on the way, it would be able to reach Gimul before the day ended. It was fast, that was for sure.

I put the finished letter in a tube and attached it to the Drei with a red cloth with a metal clasp. Now it would be allowed into the city on its own. I went outside and asked Drei to deliver the letter, to which he responded with a melodious cry and flew high into the sky. He hovered around near the clouds for a bit, then accelerated into the distance.

"That takes care of that."

"Now you just wait for a response?"

"Right."

"You already have an inn reserved, Ryoma?"

"Oh, no, I forgot."

"Perfect, you can stay at my place until this business is taken care of."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course. Feel free."

"Then I'll be happy to."

Thus, I ended up staying at Pioro's house.

Chapter 3 Episode 11: A Nostalgic Flavor

I was led to the Saionji Company's spice shop. Pioro's house was apparently connected to the store.

"Welcome, what do you need? Wait, why are you here, Dad?"

"Why shouldn't I be here? Besides, it's not just me. Ryoma's here too."

"Pardon us."

"Ryoma, we have a guest room ready for you. Settle in and get comfy."

Miyabi was managing the store as she was earlier in the day. She already seemed to know that I was staying here, as if it were decided in advance.

"I just assumed you'll be staying at the house. Was I wrong?"

"No, that's the plan, but we only just decided that a bit ago."

"We always want to be ready for guests, so we clean the guest rooms on a regular basis. And knowing Dad, I figured he'd want you to stay at our house."

"I see. Thank you."

"No problem. Want me to show you the way?"

"Please do."

Pioro went back to work while Miyabi and I headed to the guest room.

"Make yourself at home."

The room she took me to looked larger than expected for one person. The furniture wasn't too extravagant, so it exuded a warm atmosphere.

"You'll get dinner good enough to live up to the Saionji Company name. Look forward to it."

"Thank you, I will."

Miyabi nodded, satisfied by my reply. "Well, I'll be going now. Take it easy till dinner," she said, then quietly left the room.

Now that I was alone, I became curious about dinner. Whatever it was, it couldn't be as bad as the snack food I had the previous night. I wondered if it would be meat, or maybe fish, but this country didn't have many fish dishes. It was landlocked, so most of the fish available was either dried or caught from a river. Fresh fish was expensive and difficult to acquire. The only exception was in cities by one of a few

lakes. Sikum, for example, had a local fishing industry and consumed more fish on average.

Fish made me think of Japanese food, something I hadn't eaten since coming to this world. I thought that with all the other people who came here from Japan, it would have been more widespread, but I never found any in Gimul. I considered asking Pioro if there was any soy sauce or miso. If his company sold food, maybe I could at least get a hold of something that resembled those. I thought about food for a while as I relaxed and meditated to pass the time until a servant called for me. Dinner was ready.



"There you are, Ryoma. Have a seat right there."

Pioro, Miyabi, and another fox woman were already seated. Her features were similar to Miyabi's, so I assumed she was Pioro's wife. She was beautiful.

"Thank you for having me."

"You don't have to be so polite all the time. I'm sure you noticed already, but the lady to your left is Miyabi's mother and my wife. Her name's Clana."

"I'm Clana Saionji. It's a pleasure to meet you."

"I'm Ryoma Takebayashi. It's nice to meet you too."

"I've heard all about you. You have a promising future."

"Oh, no, I've just gotten lucky. I've been blessed by all the helpful people around me. All I've done is hire talented staff and left all the work to them."

I sincerely meant that. Without all of them, I most likely wouldn't have my first store, let alone be opening a second one. The assistance I had gotten from the people I encountered was what helped me make it this far.

"For you to recognize that at so young an age tells me that you're an outstanding person yourself."

"She's got that right. When the young people stumble into success, they tend to let it get to their heads and stop seeing things for what they are. They start to think they can do anything."

"Customers and employees are what build a business. If you begin to neglect them, you've failed as a merchant. At that point, you'll either need a lot of talent or some unscrupulous tactics if you want to scrape by. You already know all that, so I think you're more than worthy of praise. You can always learn how to conduct yourself as a merchant later. For now, just being able to communicate kindly and carefully is great. Miyabi has a lot to learn in that department, since she's usually pretty rude."

"Dad! Why do you have to use me as an example?!"

"You happen to be a good example that's sitting right here."

"Miyabi, you don't have to make yourself talk differently from normal. Ryoma, I'm sure you've noticed that she's trying to restrain herself."

"A little bit. I don't think it's that odd to watch your tone around customers, though, so I didn't think much of it."

"See? Ryoma only just met you, and even he can tell. You're not as good at hiding it as you think."

"God, what a pain."

Miyabi seemed to let it get her down. I didn't know why this was so frustrating to her.

"Sorry, don't mind our daughter too much."

"Miyabi took after me and became interested in business when she was just a little girl. She offered to help out around the store on her own. That was nice, but when I let her watch customer negotiations back in the day, she got just a wee bit aggressive with them. Just the other day, a customer complained that she wasn't feminine enough."

"It's not like I care if they call me feminine anyway, but..."

"But what?"

"I still hate that guy who said I wasn't! Now I feel like I need to change to show I'm better than him!"

"So you see, our daughter just hates losing. Don't let her problems bother you too much."

"Anyway, dinner. We've got some rare cuisine here today," Pioro said and gave a hand signal to a servant standing off to the side.

"You're such a good cook that it might be hard to impress you, so I went with some unique dishes."

"Hopefully they're to your liking."

They brought in the dishes. The smell reminded me of something.

"Is this miso soup?" I murmured. Pioro opened his eyes wide, then turned to disappointment. Clana smiled, evidently amused.

"You know about miso soup, Ryoma? I thought I could surprise you, darn!"

"Uh, no, I'm pretty surprised. Pioro, you have miso?"

"We do. Not a lot of folks buy the stuff, so we've got plenty in storage, if you want some."

"I'd love some!"

"Well, it's not worth much anyway, so you can have a little for free. If you like it, you can come to the store and buy more."

"All right, thank you!"

"No problem. Anyway, if you know about miso, does that mean you know soy sauce too?"

"You even have soy sauce?!"

"Sure do."

We continued to talk as we waited for the servant to bring out more trays. In the end, I convinced Pioro to give me some miso, soy sauce, and even vinegar and mirin. I had no idea these ingredients were available in this world. Pioro told me that they were produced on an island where some dragonewts lived. Their culture considered meager living a virtue, so they loved simple dishes that made the most use of the flavor of each ingredient. As such, they didn't seem to use these products in many different ways, and there was little demand for them, so there wasn't much in circulation. That seemed like a waste to me.

"First, you should eat. We can talk and eat at the same time."

"Right, then don't mind if I do."

I picked up the chopsticks and had a bite of the rice. It was my first rice in three years, and it was delicious. Bread was the staple food here, and while I didn't hate bread, I was more used to rice. Next I tried the grilled fish with soy sauce, then the miso soup, and it was all as delectable as it was on Earth.

"This brings back memories."

"What? Ryoma, did you live in a dragonewt village?"

"Huh? No."

"Really? You're acting like a dragonewt who hasn't been home in ages."

"Am I?"

"Yeah, it's not just the way you reacted. You know how to use those chopsticks. They were included because they go along with these dishes, but only our dragonewt guests tend to use them."

"Ryoma, where are you from?"

Now was the time to make up some backstory. "I come from a village in a small forest. My grandmother made miso soup for me a few times back in the day, which is also around when I learned to use chopsticks. My grandparents were adventurers who traveled the world at one point, so that's probably how they knew about it. For the ingredients, they somehow made do with wood magic."

"Is that right?"

It sounded like I convinced them.

"By the way, Ryoma, what are you doing tomorrow? Your employees are supposed to get here in about three days, right?"

"I think I'll make some furniture and train, while doing some adventuring work."

"Oh, you're an adventurer, Ryoma?" Clana asked.

"Yes, though I'm not sure whether I'd consider my business or my adventuring to be my main job at this point."

"What rank are you?"

"I'm an E Rank at the moment."

“E? You’re a year younger than I am, aren’t you?”

“I only just became an adventurer a couple months ago.”

“E is plenty for your age. You’re taking monster hunting requests to gain some experience, I’m sure.”

After that, we discussed my monster hunting jobs at the mine, and I asked about this town. It was centered around the founder of the Saionji Company when it was built and focused mostly on trade. The managers and employees of old businesses, among other citizens from Lenaf, seemed to have inherited a fair bit of Kansai culture. Clana was also from this city. I didn’t think this culture spread far beyond Lenaf, but the fact that people from Earth naturally left their mark on this world was mystifying. Maybe I would leave something behind for future generations too.

“Anything else you want to ask?”

“I’d like to know about the guild. I’ve never seen such a big building before.”

“I’ll bet, since it holds four different guilds. The building has entrances on all sides, which go to the merchant’s guild, adventurer’s guild, artisan’s guild, and dragoon’s guild.”

I’d never heard of the dragoon’s guild, so I asked about it.

“It used to be a group of tamers from the tamer’s guild who had flying monsters that could carry people and goods, but after the airport was constructed, they became an independent guild centered around the air delivery industry. I hear the tamer’s guild uses monsters for hunting and fighting and all sorts of stuff, but the tamers from the dragoon’s guild are all about transporting people and goods by air, and protecting them in the process. Getting monsters to carry things through the sky is supposed to be pretty hard, so the dragoon’s guild trains tamers for that job specifically. I hear they’re also still connected to the tamer’s guild in some way. When a tamer first makes a contract with a flying monster that can carry people, they’re told to take a class with the dragoon’s guild.”

“I never knew there was a guild like that.”

“Collecting materials is left to the adventurer’s guild. Making those materials into products is the job of the artisan’s guild. Selling those products is handled by the merchant’s guild. Transporting the products is taken care of by the dragoon’s guild. By working together, they help this town develop. We have my ancestor’s hard work to thank for that,” Miyabi said and puffed out her chest.

As with Pioro, she took pride in the airport, the city, and her ancestor from Earth. I got a good sense of that as I listened to them talk about the city and enjoyed Japanese food for the first time in years. After dinner, I returned to my room, had my cleaner slimes wash me off, and went to sleep early. As I thought about what to do

tomorrow, the satisfaction from dinner and the fatigue of travel made me sleepy. I could have forced myself to stay awake, but there wouldn't be much point. I decided to save the thinking for the next day. There would be plenty of time.

Chapter 3 Episode 12: Setting an Objective

I swiftly got dressed next morning, just before Miyabi came to visit.

“Morning, Ryoma.”

“Good morning, Miyabi.”

“I figured you’d be getting up right about now. You’re an early riser. Breakfast’s ready, so eat if you can.”

“Thank you, I will.”

I was led to the same dining room table as yesterday, and everyone was eating fast. I tended to eat at about the same speed, though. Once we were done, Pioro and Clana had to go to work.

“You take care of things here, Miyabi.”

“Help out as best you can.”

“You can count on me! Ryoma, what’ll you be doing today? You’re not used to town yet, are you? I can show you around.”

“That would be nice, but don’t you have work to do?”

“Not a problem. I may be the president’s daughter, but I’m still only twelve. I’ve got basically no work to do. I only tend to the spice shop to train for the future. I guess you have your own store and you’re only eleven, but I think you’re an exception to the rule.”

She had a point there. If she was going to show me around, then I decided to give up on adventuring for that day and focus on making furniture instead.

“Then I’d like to make furniture for my store today, so if you could tell me about any places I could buy wood, that’d be nice.”

“Leave it to me, I’ll take you to a great store,” Miyabi said proudly. I followed her outside, where Drei returned from his mission to deliver a message to Gimul.

“Oh.”

“What’s—Eek?!”

Drei landed on my shoulder. He ended up between me and Miyabi, startling her so much that she jumped backward, her tail flailing. I heard that foxes from Earth didn’t express their emotions with their tails much, but maybe fox beastkin did. Her tail hadn’t moved much until now, so it could have simply been a natural reaction to shock. In any case, I felt the need to apologize.

“Sorry I scared you. This is my familiar.”

“A familiar, eh? Now that I take a good look, that’s one beautiful monster.”

“He’s a limour bird. I had him deliver a message to Gimul,” I explained as I took the letter attached to Drei’s leg and gave it a read. It was a response from Gimul, and from what it said, the letter must have reached the store before closing time yesterday. They planned on setting off early the next morning, expecting to arrive in three days. It was all according to plan. I told Miyabi this, then we started to walk again. I bought wood at a wood processing plant and placed it in my Dimension Home, then headed to my store.



I selected a storage room for my workspace and had my acid slimes create parts. The sticky slimes and I used nails and hardening sticky fluid to assemble and reinforce chairs, desks, and shelves. Miyabi silently observed. I thought she might be bored at first, but she didn’t just seem to be watching. Sometime later, she asked me a question.

“Ryoma, what are these things?”

“Slimes. Why do you ask?”

“No, no, no, these can’t be slimes. They’re not like any slime I’ve ever seen! How are slimes using tools?!”

“I taught them. Some of my slimes can also fight with sticks, spears, and martial arts.”

“Really?!”

“Really.”

I shaved down a leftover stick of wood with a polishing wheel and handed it to one of my slimes for it to show off its skills.

“Wow, it’s actually using that thing.”

“Right?”

“Are all slimes capable of learning these skills?”

“This was just an ordinary slime like the ones you’d know at first, but after enough training, this is what it’s grown into.”

“Huh... I never knew that was possible.”

“Most people don’t. Everyone gets surprised when they first see my slimes.”

“If you shared this news with the world, wouldn’t it be a huge discovery?”

“Maybe, but people seem to ignore slimes just for being slimes. Besides, I have no plans to publicize my findings just yet.”

I muttered about how wasteful that would be, then Miyabi stared at the slime again. She remained silent for a few minutes before asking another question.

“Ryoma, what are you doing next year?”

“Why do you want to know?”

“Aren’t you eleven? When you’re twelve, you can enroll in an academy in the capital. It sounds like you’ve got a profitable business, so there’s no way you can’t pay the entry fee. Are you going to school or not?”

“I’m not interested. I’d rather live freely and train or go on adventures. Besides, from what I hear, it’d just be dealing with a bunch of people I wouldn’t like. I wouldn’t actually learn much.”

“Darn, you knew?” Miyabi sighed.

“You knew that too?”

“Of course. I’ll be going to the academy this year. I gathered info about it in advance, obviously. My dad’s also told me all about it.”

“I see. So why are you asking if I’m going to enroll?”

“You seem like a nice guy, and school might be more tolerable with you around. Relationships are supposed to be awfully formal there. And worst of all, I have a knack for magic, so I might end up standing out and getting unwanted attention from some weirdo nobles.”

“Why go to the academy at all, then?”

“I need to make connections for my future as a merchant. This academy treats nobles and commoners equally as a rule, so there’s no easier place to cozy up with nobles. But it’d be nice to have someone around who I can just chat with and relax. You seem good at magic too, so you’d be a great ally to have.”

She was pretty shrewd for her age. I always knew that merchants were scary. But this sounded like a reasonably common goal for students who enrolled at that academy. That was fine enough, but I wondered whether Miyabi was really good enough at magic to draw attention.

“So, you’re good at magic?”

“The best I can cast is one mid-level fire spell, but as far as students go, I’m a cut above the rest.”

She told me in more detail about how most new students could only use elementary magic, and there were even a fair number who needed a remedial course to learn elementary magic to begin with. If that was the crowd, then knowing a single mid-level spell was more than enough to stand out. That reminded me that fox beastkin were unique among beastkin in that they possessed a lot of mana, and they were supposed to be rare. I felt like I learned about this when I overheard a chat at the guild once. That might have been why Miyabi was good at magic.

This country had virtually no discrimination toward any race, and there was no problem with her being half beastkin, so she probably didn’t need to worry about that. When someone discriminated against

another based on race, it was the racist who was looked down upon. Racism and oppression were supposedly commonplace a long time ago, but travelers from Earth from before my time toiled to put an end to that. There was still some jealousy toward the inherent talents of certain races, however.

“I see,” I said.

“Well, if you’re not going, then what can you do? I won’t force you, and I wasn’t expecting much anyway. If you did come to the academy, I would’ve warned you to watch out for the weird nobles and introduced you to some of the good ones.”

Apparently she wanted to support me. Miyabi might have been shrewd, but she wasn’t a bad girl. It seemed like she had her work cut out for her, but I hoped she succeeded. I continued to work, letting her lend me a hand with the more simple tasks as I finished assembling the furniture and tools. At some point Miyabi went to the adventurer’s guild, then returned to my store.

“Ryoma, there’s not that much adventuring work around here at the moment,” she said. “You’d either be running errands around town, gathering herbs in the southern plains, or hunting small animals.”

“Really? I heard in Gimul that a strong monster showed up around this city.”

“Oh, did you now? That’s why you can’t go north without being at least E Rank.”

“It’s that powerful?”

“No, a party of D Ranks could take care of it just fine. But most of the local adventurers aren’t even E Rank.”

Because of the dragoon’s guild, wyverns and other large monsters frequently flew to Lenaf. They scared off other monsters, so there were few to be found around the city itself. High-ranking adventurers found themselves with nothing to hunt and no way to make a living, so they went to other towns. The guards also never operated outside the town and its gates, so this monster was a bit of a nuisance. That was why only adventurers of at least E Rank could travel north of the city. Thankfully they didn’t limit it to D Rank and above.

“So I can go if I’m an E Rank?”

“Sure, and there’d be jobs picking herbs and such in the northern woods. Oh right, you’re an E Rank, aren’t you? I won’t tell you not to go, but be careful up there. If the monster spots you, don’t think twice about running away.”

I thanked Miyabi and headed to the guild. I figured that a girl who wasn’t an adventurer found it hard to approach an adventurer’s guild, so I rejected her offer to show me the way.



I arrived at the guild and went straight to the front desk to gather information. My source was a male staff member at the guild. He was the type of worker who went about business without asking questions. When I showed him my E Rank guild card, he didn't comment on my age or appearance. Rather, he was quick to bring me the requests available in the area north of town. I received data on the monster there as well, and it was called a smash boar. They were large, vigorous boars with short tusks. Their hides were thick and it was hard to land a lethal blow on them without considerable strength. I had heard of these monsters before, and upon checking their unique features, I was sure I remembered correctly. Only D Rank adventurers or above could accept the job to slay it, so I took a request to collect herbs, then returned to Pioro's store.

On the way there, I remembered the letter I received when I first came to this world. The grandparents from the personal history I made up had actually existed in this world. When the gods created my background, their souls were called upon so I could get permission to use their name. They were from a village called Korumi, located in a dense forest called the Sea of Trees of Syrus. It was a treasure trove of rare medicinal herbs, and it contained caves with scarce and valuable ore as well. Many villages were established in that forest for the purpose of obtaining those resources, and Korumi was one of them. But the Sea of Trees of Syrus was brimming with monsters, and one of the most dangerous regions in the country. Even on the outer edges of the forest, the weakest monsters were still at least D Rank and traveled in packs. To make matters worse, adventurers who sought to collect resources in the forest and perished in the process became zombies, skeletons, ghosts, or other undead monsters. It was far more dangerous than anything on the road to Lenaf. If one had no business there, it was best avoided.

But when I received permission to use their name, I was also handed the rights to their inheritance. They had nobody to leave it for, so it was hidden somewhere. They hoped that I would use it to carry out their wish, but wouldn't force me to. If I did want to obtain their inheritance, though, I had to go to the village myself. Gain suggested that if I planned to do so, I should fight monsters that acted similar to the monsters there beforehand. One of those monsters was a smash boar.

I could have gotten to the village shortly after my arrival in this world if I had used my martial arts and energy meditation, but there was no guarantee that I could have made it out alive. That was why I stopped at the Forest of Gana. I ended up spending the next three years there to pursue personal interests, but now that I had left the forest, it was time. The wealth of resources and powerful monsters

would make it the perfect place to train. I was also going to continue borrowing the name of these grandparents, so I thought it was best that I do what they asked. But first, I had to prepare for the task.

I thought about this as I returned to Pioro's store and had dinner. When I told them that I planned to head north tomorrow, Pioro asked if I'd hunt the smash boar for them. Miyabi was quick to tell him off, and Clana chided him with a terrifying smile. I thought of it as a good target for training, but Pioro saw it as obstructive and thought it could be made into quality products. Smash boar meat smelled better than the average boar meat, and it was supposed to be soft and delicious. If I did happen to slay the smash boar, I would bring its remains to this store. I didn't accept the request to hunt the smash board, but if I happened across it, I had to fight back. I couldn't just stand there and let it kill me, after all. I wouldn't hold back. And if I did happen to kill it, nobody could complain, really. That was a bit more devious than I usually was, but maybe all the hoodlums I had to fight lately rubbed off on me. I needed to be careful about that. After dinner, I returned to my room and prepared for the next day.

Chapter 3 Episode 13: Smash Boar Hunting

After Miyabi saw me off the next day, I headed to the city's northern gate. I watched the bustling crowds as I took a leisurely walk there, but when I neared the gate, I braced myself. I was stopped at the gate, but when I showed that I was an E Rank adventurer, they let me through without any issues. I was on my way to pick medicinal herbs in a patch of foliage near the smash boar's location.

I was equipped with a bow and a knife. I also had the spear in my Item Box, but I didn't plan to use it. Spears and greatswords were supposedly effective against smash boars, but I needed to make it look like I stumbled upon the monster, so I deliberately chose weapons that would be less useful. The guild card I received when I first registered said that my weapon of choice was a bow, so it would look immediately suspicious.

I picked herbs for a while, but couldn't find the smash boar. I was told its location, but unlike the herbs, it didn't have to stay in one place forever. I didn't remember the last time I was unable to track down a target. I used search magic too, but it didn't locate the monster, or any other monsters for that matter. Miyabi seemed to be right that monsters seldom appeared in this area.

I collected herbs in other locations as I searched for the smash boar. I ended up acquiring the minimum amount of herbs I needed before finding it. The deadline was in two days and there was no need to finish so soon, but the current restrictions in this area seemed to make these plants harder to obtain, and they would pay for more than the minimum if I kept picking herbs, so there was no reason not to.

While I was considering my next move, I heard a quiet voice. It sounded faint and distant, so I thought I imagined it until I heard the voice again, this time clearly crying out for help. I prepared my bow, hid myself, and looked to see where the voice came from. There were two adventurers being chased by a giant monster. Presumably it was the smash boar, but it looked less like a boar than a pig. It did have tusks, but they were small and dull. As for its size, though, it was bigger than expected. Maybe comparable to a cow, but I didn't have time to think about it. I nocked an arrow, waited for the perfect opportunity, then let it fly. The arrow whizzed between the trees toward the raging beast ramming its way through saplings, piercing its

right eye. The pain made it thrash and squeal so loud that it could be heard throughout the forest. The two adventurers stopped and turned around.

“Don’t stop! Runaway!” I shouted. They looked around and noticed me, but they were too alarmed to do anything. I was about to yell at them again, but now I had a bigger problem. The smash boar heard me too, and its remaining eye glared in my direction.

This was far from what I planned, but I gave it a go anyway. I returned the bow to my back, then let energy circulate through my body as I gazed at my opponent. The smash boar had the anatomy of a pig, with the small, dull tusks jutting from its lower jaw being its most unique feature. The tusks weren’t poisonous, but they could be highly destructive when the smash boar did a charging attack, so I needed to be cautious. The biggest problem, however, was its size. I now estimated that it was one and a half times the size of a cow, and it was covered in thick flesh. It had many wounds that likely came from the two adventurers, but I doubted any of them reached its organs, or even its muscles. Attacks to its torso would be ineffective, but there was little flesh to protect the head.

The smash boar roared and charged at me. The trees obstructed its path, forcing it to slow down enough that I could react with ease. When I dodged to the right, the smash boar crashed into the tree behind me. It knocked the tree down, then turned to face me and attacked again. This time, I evaded to the left. As it passed by, I enhanced my arm with energy and hit its right temple with a palm heel strike. The smash boar squealed again, quieter than last time, and stopped in its tracks. The attack must have been effective. I could feel that the flesh was thin there.



The smash boar shook its head and tried to strike me with its tusks, but I took a step back and kicked it in the left temple. This blow was more effective than the last one. The smash boar's right front leg gave out, its knee hitting the ground. To follow up the attack, I jumped off its jaw, grabbed onto its tusk, and struck its right elbow. I heard a blunt sound and felt its bone shatter. The smash boar's legs quivered until it collapsed where it stood. It looked like slaying the beast was simpler than expected.

"Um, hi!"

"Thank you for saving us!"

"Oh, don't mention it. Are either of you hurt?"

While I was confirming the kill, the two adventurers came up behind me. I only saw them from a distance before and their armor made it hard to tell, but now I noticed one of them was a woman.

"No, thanks to you."

"But one of our allies is still off over there, and she's injured. We can't repay you for the help, but let us go to her side."

"That's fine, of course. I can go with, if you don't mind. I can use healing magic."

"Really?!"

"Thank you! We'd appreciate it!"

"Oh, but I can't leave this smash boar here unattended."

"I'm sorry, but what's your name?"

"Excuse me, I should have introduced myself. I'm Ryoma Takebayashi."

"Ryoma, huh? You stay here. We'll bring our ally to you."

"There are some scummy adventurers around here. Be careful," they said before they left.

If this were a game, I'd think that conversation was setting up for these scummy adventurers to show up while I was alone. I stood on guard, but didn't sense anyone in the surrounding area. If that wasn't a concern, then this was a good time to drain the blood. I only had to ask my bloody slime to do it. I decided to get my healing slimes out too, and by the time I finished, the bloody slime had already finished. I waited a while longer, but no scummy adventurers appeared before the other two returned with a wounded swordswoman.

"Over here! I'll begin the treatment right away!"

It looked like the smash boar had rammed the woman, because her whole body was battered. She had a fractured leg and shoulder, along with numerous scratches, and her face was drenched in sweat. Thankfully there was little harm to her torso and no broken ribs. Her organs would still be a concern for the next few days, but her injuries looked curable.

I cast High Heal on her wounds repeatedly. Her sweating and groaning stopped and she became well enough to thank me within a short time.

“Thank you so much!”

“Thanks, you saved us all.”

“Don’t worry about it. You still haven’t regained your energy, so take it easy for a while.”

“This is nothing, thanks to the healing magic from you and your slimes.”

When we got back to introducing ourselves, I learned that the injured woman was named Filly. The man who was being chased by the smash boar was Ken, and the woman was Lurie.

“You’ve done so much for us, but we can’t do anything for you.”

“At least take this. I’m sure this isn’t enough, but I can pay you the rest when we get back to town,” Ken said and handed me a small bag of money. I wasn’t hurting for money, but these three seemed to be E Rank adventurers and most likely didn’t have much cash to spare.

“I’ll take this money, but I won’t be needing anymore. Instead, can you tell me about those scummy adventurers you mentioned?”

“Is that all you want?”

“I think we owe you more than that, but all right. The three of us team up a lot, but today we had another two adventurers in our group.”

They had befriended a couple of C Rank adventurers at a bar they were visiting from out of town, and they were asked if they could act as guides on the mission to slay the smash boar. They were to be rewarded with some combat coaching to give them experience. In addition, they were supposed to receive a portion of the reward for the request.

“I had them show their guild cards to confirm they were C Ranks. And if they ever caused trouble or broke the guild rules, it would’ve been recorded on their cards. There was nothing like that on theirs, so I thought they would be fine.”

“The reward money they offered was also reasonable.”

“But they made us fight and claimed it was to give us experience, then they ran off and used us as decoys when things took a turn for the worse. I was sent flying and hurt so bad that I couldn’t move, so these two protected me by drawing the smash boar’s attention and running away. You know the rest.”

“I see.”

Either they were tricked, or even C Rank adventurers weren’t strong enough for the smash boar. One way or another, these didn’t sound like the most reputable adventurers. I didn’t think these three

were lying, at least, considering two of them were being chased and one of them was actually injured. If they lied, that would mean they hurt themselves and risked their lives to do it.

“Is this really enough money?”

“It’s fine, I’m the one who offered to use healing magic. Consider it a freebie.”

“But-”

“Lurie, I know it hurts, but you can’t make him take it. Let’s accept his offer,” Filly said. Looking at her made me think of something.

“Would you be willing to help carry this smash boar to town? I also killed it without taking the request, so if you could tell them I ran into the monster on accident and slew it in self-defense, I’d appreciate it.”

The corpse was lighter now that the blood was drained, and by enhancing my body with magic and energy meditation, the weight itself was nothing I couldn’t carry. But I was also small, so I would have to drag it along the ground. On top of that, I wanted someone to vouch for me.

“If that’s all you need.”

“Yes, please let us help!”

“Thanks.”

With the assistance of the three adventurers, I carried my prey back to town. The guard at the gate was shocked, but since killing this beast made his job easier, he let us pass after a brief explanation.



We got a lot of looks on the way to Pioro’s store, but made it there safely.

“Whoa!”

“What is this?!”

“I’m sorry, can you let me through? Sorry.”

The customers outside the store were agape at the smash boar I lugged through the streets. A clerk came to see what was happening, followed by Pioro and Miyabi.

“Ryoma?! What is this massive thing?!”

“Oh, Miyabi, hello. It’s a smash boar.”

“Well, I can see that! What I mean is, why is it here?! I said it was dangerous, but you fought it anyway?!”

Miyabi kept up the questions until Pioro calmed her down and the three adventurers explained the situation for me.

“So he only fought that smash boar because of us.”

“If he hadn’t helped, I don’t know if we’d still be alive.”

“Don’t blame him too much. Please!”

Miyabi watched them bow their heads and sighed.

“You did it to save people? Well, I guess I can’t be too hard on you.”

“From what it sounds like, Ryoma wasn’t trying to get himself into a reckless fight. Seems fine to me.”

“I’m sorry I worried you.”

“You sure did, yeesh. That’s enough of that for one day. Dad, we need to prepare this meat before it goes bad.”

“Right! Don’t stand around here, bring it inside!”

Pirot led us into the butcher shop’s dissection space.

“Can we start now?”

“Hold it!”

When an employee was about to dissect the corpse, Clana popped in and told him to wait. A staff member from the adventurer’s guild was here to visit.

“What do they need? Can you give us a bit? We’re in the middle of something.”

“They want to inspect the smash boar. It’s been rampaging around in the north for a while now, and they want to check and make sure it’s actually been slain.”

I did tell the gate guard that I was selling it to the Saionji Company, so they must have gotten in contact after that. Some time later, a man I met at the guild yesterday entered the store.

“Welcome,” Pirot greeted him.

“I’m sorry to interrupt in the middle of work. I’ll leave as soon as I see that the smash boar has been killed,” the man said and walked a circle around the smash boar, then sighed with relief. “This is indeed the smash boar. Thank you for your cooperation. Now we can lift the restrictions on traveling through the north gate. We appreciate your help in slaying this beast. Other jobs in the north should be more easily taken care of now too.”

The man bowed and turned to leave, but the three adventurers frantically stopped him and explained their own situation. “Is that right?” he responded. “Then I can create a written testimony about those two, if the three of you would be willing to attend me to the guild. Mr. Takebayashi, bring part of the smash boar to the guild at any time to receive your reward.”

“Thank you.”

The man left with the three adventurers. They thanked me one last time before they exited the workspace. After I saw them off, I came back to the dissection space and saw the workers ready and waiting to start.

“All right, that interruption’s over with. Begin!”

“Right!”

“Ryoma, you don’t mind selling me all the meat?”

“That’s fine, I don’t know who else I would sell it to. But can you let me keep a little to eat for myself? You can take all the rest.”

“That’s a small price to pay. Right, everyone?”

All the workers agreed. Then the dissection began, and they had some questions.

“What’s wrong?”

“This smash boar doesn’t have a drop of blood.”

“What’s going on here? Did the blood harden? Even then, there should be some drops left.”

“There’s really no blood at all.”

Pioro checked the meat himself and cocked his head.

“I’m sorry, I drained the blood.” All eyes turned toward me.

“Without cutting the body open? How do you drain blood this cleanly?”

“I have a special method. Have you ever heard of a monster called a bloody slime?” I asked.

One of the workers spoke up. “That’s a slime that sucks blood, right? I spotted one in the forest when I was a kid.”

“That’s right.”

“There’s a bloodsucking slime? Ryoma, did you have it drain the smash boar’s blood?”

“Yes, I do the same with everything I hunt. It’s especially helpful for big monsters when I want to make them as light as possible. The meat should still be good, but does this mean you can’t buy it?”

“The meat’s been appraised and it looks fine. If anything, you made it more valuable than it would’ve been otherwise. I’d be interested in getting one of those slimes for myself.”

I told Pioro more about the bloody slime. I only had one for the moment, and he would need a tamer to make a contract with it if he didn’t want the slime to run off and cause trouble, so I objected to giving him mine. If I got more bloody slimes in the future and Pioro hired a trustworthy tamer, though, I would consider offering him one. Teaching the world more about the value of slimes couldn’t hurt, and Pioro’s store would be a safe place for them. Besides, unlike my cleaners and scavengers, bloody slimes were something that I might be able to find if I searched for them. I had no reason to hold onto mine that tightly.

While I was thinking to myself, they finished dissecting the smash boar. I received some meat for personal use, a medium gold coin for the meat I sold, and a tusk to prove I slew the smash boar. I was pretty tired after all that transpired that day, so I decided to take the herbs to the guild the next morning.

Chapter 3 Episode 14: The Second Store is Complete

The following morning, Pioro gave me miso, soy sauce, and other ingredients. Starting the day in a good mood, I went to the guild to submit my herbs and the smash boar tusk. They said they would quickly prepare my reward. The man from yesterday must have told them about it in advance. I thought up some excuses as to why I killed the smash boar, but it turned out they weren't necessary. Normally there would be some degree of questioning, but thanks to those three adventurers, they didn't doubt me at all.

The staff member left in charge of getting my reward thanked me personally. When I asked why, he said he was a friend of the three adventurers. I asked about the other two adventurers they were with, and he said they had already been captured. Last night, a guild staff member went to a bar after work and sighted them talking to a party of E Rank adventurers, then reported them to the guild. They were swiftly arrested. After that there was an investigation where their crimes were confirmed, and their guild cards were found to be fake. Some additional crimes were uncovered as well, so they were expelled from the adventurer's guild. Following a strict examination, they were sentenced to either at least five years of forced labor in the mines, or life as a slave indefinitely.

"It's possible to make fake guild cards?"

"The guild itself can edit cards to add or remove information, so yes, it's possible. It requires a particular magic item, though, so this isn't something the average adventurer could do. In this case, they took the more simple approach of using someone else's cards. One of them found a card somewhere and used it as it was. The other cut apart his own card and put it back together with the key parts of another card. I've seen attempts at this that leave the card badly damaged, but I have to admit that this one looked natural enough that it was hard to tell. He was apparently an apprentice at some workshop, but he was forced out for being a troublemaker."

"Sounds like you have to be careful about how you manage your cards."

"Yes, so we've learned."

I thanked him for the information and left the guild. I had nothing left to do here, so I decided to return to Pioro's store.



“Mr. Takebayashi, the president was looking for you,” a worker told me just as I returned. I told him that I could meet with Pioro right away, so I was guided to Pioro’s office, wondering what he needed. I drank the tea Pioro provided as I listened to him.

“Ryoma, can you use that smash boar meat, soy sauce, and miso to cook something?”

Japanese dishes with pork included tonjiru, pork shabu, pork bowls, and pork shogayaki.

“Yes, a few.”

“Could you tell me about them? Grilled fish and miso soup are good, but they get boring after a while. If there are other ways to use soy sauce and miso, maybe they’d sell better. It’s an idea I’ve had since a while back.”

I yearned for the chance to have more accessible Japanese food, so I told him what I knew.

“Then first, there’s a dish that uses pork and ginger — err, smash boar and giger. How does that sound?”

I had pork, soy sauce, and mirin, and I could buy giger at the drugstore. That was everything I needed to make pork shogayaki.

“I hate to ask this of a customer, but could you make that for me? You can use whatever ingredients are available at my store.”

“Are you sure?”

“It’ll be something I’ve never eaten before, so I’m getting my money’s worth.”

Thus, I ended up cooking lunch. But to my surprise, Clana and Miyabi joined me. Some servant must have told them about this, but when I asked why they were there, they laughed.

“Every lady should learn how to cook, that’s what Mom always tells me. I don’t hate cooking anyway, and if the owner of a store that handles food had a daughter who didn’t know how to cook, it’d look bad.”

“I’ve never heard of this dish before, Ryoma. I can’t wait to see your cooking skills.”

They watched me as I began to cook with the tools and ingredients I prepared in advance. First, I washed the rice and placed it over a fire. Boiling rice on a charcoal stove was an experience I never had on Earth. I decided to make tonjiru to eat with the shogayaki too. I used some type of seaweed that resembled kelp and some small fish to make the broth, then added onions, burdock, mushrooms, smash boar meat, and vegetables. When I first came to the city, I learned that this world’s stores sold a surprising number of vegetables with names I recognized from Earth, and they resembled

their Earth equivalent. This was no doubt influenced by people from Earth.

While I was making the tonjiru, Miyabi kept an eye on the rice for me. Once the tonjiru was done, I took a bottle out of my Item Box and poured the extra broth inside, then added soy sauce, mirin, and vinegar.

“Ryoma, what’s that?” Clana asked after watching me do it.

“It’s a seasoning made by mixing soy sauce, mirin, soup broth, and vinegar. Of course, the amount of each affects the final flavor, so the way you make it is up to personal taste. I like to add a bit of lemon juice for a more refreshing taste. It’s good on salad, and it goes well with meat and fish.”

Clana stared at the bottle for a bit, then returned to the tonjiru. Once that was fully prepared, it was about time to start making the shogayaki. While strips of meat were frying in a pan, I grated the giger and mixed it with soy sauce and mirin to make the sauce. When the meat began to cook through, there was a sizzling sound and a savory aroma filled the room. Miyabi and Clana stared at the meat, but I still had to stir it with the sauce. With that, the shogayaki was complete.

It was a simple, yet delicious dish. There were many ways to make shogayaki, some of which involved letting the meat soak in the sauce, but I didn’t do that often. On Earth I preferred to cook anything that was quick and easy but still tasted good, but maybe now it would be worth taking my time.

I chopped up some cabbage and these tomatoes that were larger than cherry tomatoes, but smaller than regular tomatoes. The rice finished cooking too, so I walked over to it, then saw a man with black hair in the corner of my eye.

“Pioro? When did you get here?” I asked as he showed himself at the entrance to the kitchen. He looked like he felt bad about something.

“Well, you see, it smelled so good that I couldn’t help myself,” he said. The smell of the freshly cooked rice and shogayaki must have made him hungry.

“Dad, mind your manners. If you want to see how it’s coming along, just look.”

As Miyabi chided her father, I arranged plates for the four of us.

“All done.”

“Oh, really? Then let’s get eating.”

We had the servants bring the food to the dining room, then sat at the table.

“There you go. Smash boar cooked with giger.”

“It looks absolutely delicious,” Miyabi said and began to eat. She adeptly picked up a piece with her chopsticks and took a bite. A

moment later, her ears stood up straight. “This is great! It’s incredible!”

“Oh, you’re right. I knew it’d be good when it started cooking, but it’s even better than I thought.”

“The meat’s great, but what’s this soup? Tonjiru, right? This is pretty good too. Plenty of vegetables too, so it should be nutritious. If word about these recipes spread, I’ll bet our soy sauce and miso would sell!”

It seemed to be to their liking. I was glad they enjoyed it. Pioro seemed more focused on the profit potential, but he certainly approved of the food as well. I described the recipes as I tasted my own food, and it was to my satisfaction. After we ate, Pioro declared that his deli would sell the smash boar and giger starting tonight. And just as he said, they put up a sign listing it under their recommended dishes that night. They sure worked fast.



I had breakfast the next morning, then left for my store. There was a carriage stopped outside the Saionji Company. Riding it was a familiar face.

“Carla!”

“Oh, Boss!”

It turned out to be Carla. She was looking away from me to tell some other people what to do, so she didn’t notice I was there.

“So you made it. Thanks for coming all this way.”

“I’m sorry it took so long, Boss. Where’s the store?”

“It’s over there.”

When I pointed to the store, Carla ordered some unfamiliar people to head there. I assumed they were new hires. I took Carla and Caulkin’s group with me to go meet Pioro, then got to work on opening my store.



Four days had passed since then. It took two days to work out the details and figure out everyone’s jobs, then we opened on the third day. There were five new hires. They seemed to have been given some simple training already, so they adapted to their work smoothly. One of them was the chef for this branch store, while the other four were clerks and bodyguards.

The bodyguards were formerly C Rank adventurers. I asked them how they ended up at my store, and they said that they did well enough as adventurers, but they were beginning to see their limits. One monster they encountered killed two of their allies. They had no

knowledge of this monster and no choice but to flee, so they only survived because of luck, and because their deceased friends distracted the monster. They knew that they were too injured to make it back to town, so they did everything they could to draw the creature's attention. The survivors ran to the guild, told them about the monster, and let them deal with it. Luckily there was a party of A Rank adventurers in town, so they dispatched it easily. The friends of the dead adventurers took a look at the monster's corpse to help themselves grieve, and they learned that it was a B Rank monster. Their party stood no chance against this beast and it killed two of them, but it was only one rank higher than they were, and this other party killed it with ease. When they saw that, they gave up on ever climbing to a higher rank. C Rank requests paid enough money to live on, so they saved up that money as they searched for a job to settle down in. Then they heard about my store, so they went with that.

C Rank adventurers might not have been enough for a B Rank monster, but they would be a capable force against hoodlums. The guildmaster also vouched for them as adequate guards. They also said that they heard I was an adventurer and told me about their experiences, as well as warning me to consider safety first. They were nice, friendly people of the sort who seemed like they could get along with anyone.

A day ago, Ken's party came to my store when it had just opened and few customers were there. I prayed that they would become regulars here and explained how the store worked, along with introducing the staff, but we ended up talking about the smash boar. Their party's actions seemed to touch a chord with the new guards, who offered advice and guidance. This was when I heard their story about when they quit being adventurers.

In any case, I was no longer needed in Lenaf, so I left the new store to Carla and decided to return to Gimul. Pioro, Miyabi, and my employees attended me to the city gate.

"Good luck, Ryoma. Now's the time to fight, keep opening up more stores!"

"Be careful on the way back."

"Boss, don't worry about the new store."

"We'll learn to run the place as quickly as possible!"

"You can count on us. No more wasting money like we used to. We'll make this store a success!"

"Boss, take care."

"Ryoma, don't do anything too crazy. I don't know when I'll see you again, but don't die before I do."

"Of course. I can't die yet." I still had to find my grandparents' inheritance, do more research, prove the worth of slimes, and keep my

promise to Elia.

Speaking of which, Miyabi was going to start at the academy in the capital this year. Maybe she would meet Elia. Elia did say she had no friends, and Miyabi was going to the academy to meet nobles, so I had an idea.

“Miyabi.”

“What?”

“You’re going to the academy this year, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, what about it?”

“In that case, I have a request for you.”

“What? Maybe I’ll do it, maybe not.”

“A girl named Eliaria is going to start attending the academy this year, and I’d like you to befriend her if possible. She’s a nice girl and a noble, so she’ll be a good person to know. Also, tell her that I wished her luck.”

“Well, as long as she’s not one of the weird ones.”

“Thank you. Good luck to you too, Miyabi.”

“I’ll do just fine. Good luck yourself, Ryoma.”

I bowed to all of them, then set off on the road back to Gimul.

Chapter 3 Episode 15: Some Changes

I arrived in Gimul around noon the next day, then walked to the store.

“Hello, Boss.”

“Hello to you too, Carme.”

After we greeted each other, he had something to report.

“This has had no effect on business, but there was a little incident the other day.”

“Was there? Tell me more, won’t you?”

“Yes, sir. It’s about that charcoal you left in the kitchen. You said it cleans the air and absorbs moisture and such, didn’t you?”

“It depends on the amount and the material the charcoal is made from, but yes.”

“You see, the others decided that if it can help one room, they may as well put it in other rooms. It didn’t get in the way of anything, so I allowed it. But the following day, some of the charcoal had disappeared. I feared that we were robbed by a charcoal burglar for a moment there.”

“Uh, a charcoal burglar? Well, it sounds like you found out that wasn’t the case.”

“Yes, it turned out that cleaner slimes were the culprits.”

“Cleaners? Did they eat the charcoal?”

“All of the charcoal in the slimes’ standby room, yes. Only a few of the cleaner slimes ate some, but according to Maria, those few have ceased to eat grime off of the laundry. Perhaps they’re sick.”

“Most likely not, but I’d like to take a look at those slimes.”

“Understood.” Carme said and left the office, no doubt to soon return with the slimes. I predicted that they would have evolved into something called a carbon slime or something along those lines.

“I’m back with the slimes, and Maria too.”

“Hello!”

In the brief time that I had spent thinking about slimes, Carme returned. Maria entered behind him, looking a bit uncomfortable. They were each holding a cleaner slime.

“Thanks. Bring them over here.”

I observed the slimes as Maria told me what she knew. She found out that these slimes prefer charcoal at the beginning of a workday, when the slimes were told to eat.

"I was told they'd only eat charcoal."

"Hm, they do like charcoal the best, and I'm pretty sure they don't like laundry. But some other slimes cleaned the laundry first."

"Oh, is that right?" I said. I could have had them continue working anyway, but there was no need to force them to do laundry. "It doesn't sound like they're sick. I would guess they're ready to evolve. Evolution changes their diet and abilities, so leave these two with me. Tell me if any other slimes start to have different preferences. It's not unthinkable that they would start to damage the laundry in some way, So Carme, I want you to come up with countermeasures for that. Maria, continue to manage the slimes. In the event that some laundry is damaged in the future, we'll compensate the customer and isolate the slime."

"I'll do my best!"

"Thank you. Carme and I will help, so don't worry about it too much. Personally, I'd actually like to thank you."

I could sense a new slime was coming, and I looked forward to it immensely. I almost wanted to reward her for a job well done. I was eager to go home and make more charcoal. Anyway, as we kept talking, Maria seemed to calm down. The contracts of the two slimes were transferred to me, settling the issue with the slimes. I had Maria get back to work, then gave my own report.

"The new store in Lenaf has opened for business. They'll be sending periodic reports our way."

"I'm glad to hear it worked out."

"Thanks. That's all I have to say about the store, but there's actually a personal matter I'd like to mention."

I told Carme that I decided to return to my hometown and retrieve my grandparents' inheritance. That meant that he would have to handle even more administrative duties than he did already.

"So with that in mind, I was thinking that I should gradually take on more adventuring work."

"I see. Going back to your original plan, then."

"We still haven't known each other for that long, but I have faith in your abilities. I'm sorry to ask so much of you, but I hope you accept."

"Of course, leave the store to me. I'm happy to support you as necessary," Carme said with an excited smile. Now I didn't have to worry about the store. "By the way, where is your hometown? I don't believe you've told me its name."

"Have you heard of the Sea of Trees of Syrus? It's in that area... uh, why are you looking at me like that?"

The instant I mentioned the location, his normally calm and reserved face changed in a way I had never seen before. "Ahem,

excuse me. I'm a bit surprised anyone lived there," he said with a bit of difficulty.

"So it's considered dangerous, then?"

"It's a vast and harsh jungle inhabited by countless monsters. If you traveled far enough inside, you could even encounter A Rank monsters. If not for bases built there long ago, it wouldn't even be possible to resupply there, from what I hear. Thinking about it rationally, it's a miracle that you got out of there alive."

I laughed uncomfortably. "Well, I'm planning to get back there through normal methods, so first I'll have to raise my adventurer rank. I'd like to prepare and limber up in full before I go."

"Then tell Mr. Morgan. I think he can help with procuring supplies, and the Morgan Trading Company has many branch stores as well, so they should prove convenient."

I was afraid that Carme might try to stop me, but in the end, he provided some useful information and cheered me on.



I visited the Morgan Trading Company before returning home, and they seemed busier than usual. I considered coming back another day, but a clerk who I met before welcomed me, and I was able to get a meeting with Serge. When I told him about my plans, he had a similar reaction to Carme.

"You're from the Sea of Trees of Syrus? That must have been brutal."

"Well, I was so frantic about leaving at the time that I don't remember most of the details."

"I see. I don't blame you. I don't know what to say about that place. I have heard of adventurers who went there and said they witnessed the sheer tenacity of humans from how they could survive in that harsh environment. I could never enter the region myself. But what compels you to return there now?"

"I encountered a monster in Lenaf the other day that was a bit similar to a monster from my homeland, so that reminded me of it. But from what I hear, the village is now deserted."

"Considering its location, that's quite possible."

"Confirming that is another reason I'd like to go there. I think it's a long shot, but it's a goal I have as an adventurer."

"I see. Then I'll support you from the shadows. If you ever need something, please use my company."

"Thank you. By the way, is something happening today?"

People seemed to be running about with more fervor than before. Maybe I picked a bad time to stop by.

"No. In fact, today was a good day for you to come. Starting

tomorrow, I'll be spending a week at the magic item market opening in Keleban. We're preparing for that."

"A magic item market? That sounds interesting."

"Oh, are you interested?"

Serge's eyes lit up. They were the eyes of a fanatic.

"I haven't had the opportunity to mess with many magic items. Do you like them?"

"I'm something of a collector of them, as my friends know all too well. I'm going to this market half for work, half for fun."

"Really? It does sound like it'd be fun to check out."

"It is. Even magic items of the same type may differ depending on the craftsman or the workshop. And this market is unique in that one-of-a-kind items and the work of apprentices is more readily available. When you find truly captivating items and promising talent, it's that much more interesting. I've tried to make some myself, but I'm not cut out to be a craftsman."

"Serge, can you use enchanting magic?"

"No, I have so little magical energy that I can't even use much elemental magic. But some varieties of magic items can be made without magical energy. One moment, please," Serge said and, now totally nerding out, skipped out of the room. He soon returned with a wooden box. "Take a look at this." He took a gear out of the box. It looked perfectly ordinary at first, but when Serge inserted some energy, it began to slowly spin on the desk. "This gear is enchanted with a non-elemental spell called Spin. As you can see, just adding magical energy will make it spin in a particular direction, so it can be used in a power generator. These are generally used in magimobiles."

That sounded like the magic version of an automobile, but I had yet to see anything of the sort. I asked Serge about them.

"Unfortunately, they're not especially practical. Some use magical energy from humans while others use magic crystals, but they don't have quite enough power to move the passengers, luggage, and the vehicle itself all at once, and the magic crystals are costly. For work purposes, carriages are far superior. But once a year in the capital, they hold a big race with magimobiles. I'm also interested in them personally and own one myself," Serge said softly, but I detected his incredible passion. "Oh, I suppose I've gotten off-topic. There are other types of magic items as well, but by using whatever magic items you acquire, you can create new magic items without using the least bit of magical energy. There are many craftsmen who specialize in this."

"I see. That's interesting."

"You can have this, if you'd like."

"Oh, I don't think I can accept this."

Serge held out the box containing the gear. When I turned down the generous offer, he scratched his head and said, "I bought this at last year's market, but I have more than I know what to do with."

He bought a young apprentice's creations as a prior investment, along with products he cared more for. It sounded like he had absolutely no use for this gear and it only took up space, so I accepted it in the end.

"Thank you. I felt bad about visiting with no prior notice, but you're even giving me a gift for being here."

"Don't worry about it. It helps to have someone who will take the lesser merchandise."

"If I ever come up with an interesting item to make, I'll show it to you."

"Oh! Please do. I look forward to it."

Serge smiled at me, and we parted ways. I felt just a bit closer to him that day. Now it was time to go home and take care of my slimes.

Chapter 3 Episode 16: Competent Newbie

"I'm home!" I shouted when I returned to the mine. All my limour birds were away, and while my slimes were present, they were incapable of answering me. My voice echoed as I fed the slimes and arranged my new haul of items.

Next, I decided to create a furnace for my charcoal-eating cleaner slimes. I selected a location between two tunnel entrances in the wall of stone next to my house. I used earth magic to dig a new hole parallel to the existing ones, then gradually expanded the cramped space inside until to create a moderately large oval room. I just had to sometimes cast Rock to reinforce the walls as I moved forward, so it didn't take long. In the end, the ceiling was high enough for a child to stand and walk around, and the walls were about as wide as a tent meant for a couple of adults.

After that, I called an earth slime over and placed it upon a huge scavenger and had it pushed up to the ceiling. The earth slime turned part of the ceiling into dirt, then jumped back down. Then I repeated the process, having the scavenger lift the earth slime into the opened portion of the ceiling. After doing this a few more times, the slime broke through the top of the ceiling, creating a passage that passed through the tunnel above. The earth slime still seemed to have some energy, so I had it reinforce the walls as it came back. Now the chimney was completed, which also meant that most of the furnace was completed.

I almost felt like it was too simple, but it was already usable. The traditional method of creating charcoal involved digging a hole and making a framework inside, then stuffing it with wood and burying it under dirt and even more wood. That was a time-consuming way to set up a furnace, but it was also possible to make charcoal with oil drums, bonfires, and more. The important thing was that you couldn't let the heat escape, and you had to be able to adjust the airflow as the wood burned. All I needed now was a lid for the chimney. I could adjust the airflow by using red clay made from stone and water.

That work was over, so next, I went on my patrol of the mine. I didn't look after every inch of the place, so I didn't have to go far from the house to find tons of weeds. Considering I could use those as fuel, though, it wasn't so bad. The weeds that were tall enough to hide my

whole body could be cut and left in the sun to dry somewhere so it would be easier to use as kindling. I could use it to make charcoal too, of course, so I cut it as I went about my patrol.

Eventually, I heard the cries of limour birds. I looked up at the sky and saw all my limour birds flying around, but they acted a bit differently from usual. The sunlight made it hard to see, but I saw what appeared to be a separate flock of birds. The limour birds seemed to be surrounding them. They may have been using magic too, because the other birds were trying to run away. When they were fully cornered, Eins let out a piercing cry and all the little silhouettes plummeted to the ground. They must have been hunting, but the way they went about it reminded me of dolphins more than birds. They ganged up on the opposing birds, then the nightmare limour bird used its special mind attack. I didn't know if the birds lost consciousness or what, but they lost control and fell from the sky one by one. Some of the limour birds even took bites out of them in midair, as if getting a taste of the food before the meal.

Figuring that I should go take a look, I headed toward the peak of the mountain where it looked like the birds fell. I called out to greet my limour birds, and they responded by calling back, some flesh splattering from their beaks. What I thought were other birds turned out to be cave bats. I asked where they came from, and one of my birds flew off to one of the tunnels, then came back. That tunnel seemed to be the place. In the few days I was away, they presumably made it their home. Drei brought me one of them, as if he thought I was watching them because I wanted to join in, but I didn't especially want to eat a bat. I didn't mind saving any leftovers, but they were the ones who did the hunting, so they had the right to eat it. Their hunting helped me out too, so I told them to keep up the good work and walked away.

I didn't know that limour birds hunted in groups, though. I had watched them hunt a few times before, but I only ever saw them act alone, so this was somewhat of a surprise. They could use wind magic, so maybe they'd be able to use Sound Bomb if I taught them. If so, it would be pretty helpful during hunts. I decided to try teaching them sometime.



I went to the adventurer's guild the next morning.

"Good morning."

"Oh, Ryoma, taking work here today?"

Maylene was there sticking requests on the bulletin board.

"Yes, I'm not so busy with the store now, so I want to start getting serious about adventuring work."

“Really?! That’s great news. What kind of job would you like?”

“I actually have some particular requirements, if you don’t mind discussing it in detail.”

“I wouldn’t mind at all. Our job is to support adventurers. Tell me anything. But whether I can actually help is another story. After I’m done with this, we can—”

“No!” Somebody suddenly shouted from the reception desk.

“Oh, excuse me for a moment,” Maylene muttered, then headed to the counter with two men and a female receptionist who I wasn’t familiar with. “You there! Don’t tease her too much.”

“Oh, Maylene.”

“Sorry, maybe we went a bit far.”

The two men acted somewhat casual about it, but obediently bowed their heads and left. The receptionist apologized to Maylene profusely for some reason. She beckoned me over.

“Is something wrong?”

“Kind of, but let me introduce you first. This is Paena, a new hire from last week.”

“I’m... P-Paena. It’s nice to meet you.”

“I’m Ryoma Takebayashi. It’s nice to meet you too.”

“I’m sure you figured this out already, but she’s a little timid. Young men tend to pick on her.”

“Ugh, I’m so sorry.”

Paena looked to be about high school age. She seemed human, but her personality and small stature conjured images of a rodent. She wasn’t as gorgeous as Maylene, but she had a pretty face and came across as warm and innocent. She seemed like someone I could have gone out with under different circumstances. I was starting to get depressed thinking about it.

“Maylene, what did you call me over for?”

“Like I said, assisting adventurers is part of our job, so would you mind letting her handle it? I’ll sit with her, of course, so I can help if there are any problems.”

“That would be perfectly fine. Thank you for agreeing to help me, Paena.”

“D-Don’t mention it! I’ll try.”

I was guided to another room. It wasn’t that big, but had a table and chairs, so it was a good enough place for a conversation.

“I didn’t know the guild had rooms like this.”

“They’re used for training newbies like me and interrogating adventurers who commit crimes, among other things. Oh! Please sit, I’ll make you some tea.”

“Oh, you don’t have to do that.”

“Sorry for the wait, I brought drinks. Now let’s begin.”

Maylene finished with the bulletin board and came in with a tray of drinks for three.

“Now, what did you want to discuss?”

“My future work as an adventurer. I have a goal in mind. I’m currently E Rank, but I want to rise up to C Rank. Also, I’m looking for jobs involving monsters on this list.”

“Let me see here. Treants, mad salamanders, calif monkeys...”

I handed her a list of monsters like those in the Sea of Trees of Syrus. She compared it against some files she had on hand.

“E Ranks wouldn’t be allowed to fight some of these.”

“I don’t mind having to climb the ranks until then, but I’d at least like to procure information on these monsters in advance. I’ve heard that the guild handles information about monsters and terrain as well. May I have some related documents?”

“Yes! It will cost some money, and take a few days depending on how much you want, but we can accommodate you. What would you like, precisely?”

I wanted basic information on the listed monsters, including their ecology and habitats, based on all the most modern information available if at all possible. But I didn’t think they’d be able to fetch this information right away, and monster sightings outside of their habitats were only useful when they were timely, so I didn’t need those. I asked them to prepare whatever they could based on these conditions.

“Also, please provide information about the Sea of Trees of Syrus and all the monsters that dwell there.”

“Wait.”

“Is something wrong, Maylene?”

“The Sea of Trees of Syrus? Now that I give this list a closer look... Ryoma, are you planning to go into that jungle?”

“That’s the idea.”

I gave her the same explanation as I gave to Serge.

“So that’s how it is.”

“I see. I’m sorry I interrupted. If you’re going to raise your rank to the required level and do everything necessary to prepare, the guild has no right to stop you. Carry on.”

“Thank you. How much will the information cost?”

“Quite a bit for this amount, I would think. I’m sorry, can you answer this, Maylene?”

“If you want documents, you’ll have to pay the price of the ink and paper, as well as payment for the staff who created it. This is a large range of information, too. Scrutinizing the information and producing the documents could take anywhere from two weeks to one month. It will cost a few small gold coins at the least, and up to ten at

the most. That's all I can tell you."

"No problem. I wouldn't want to haggle and end up with less information than I need. If it means getting accurate information, I'll pay whatever I need."

"The guild guarantees its accuracy. Paena, prepare a contract and some blank paper to be used for the exchange. I taught you what to do, right?"

"Yes!"

She exited the room, leaving only me and Maylene.

"I had no idea you were from that place."

"Do you know a lot about the Sea of Trees?"

"Only what I've learned from work. I know it's dangerous, that's for sure. But this does explain some things."

"What?"

"I mean, comparing you to other kids, you're far too capable. Like during your job at the mines, where you joined a group of B Ranks and fought goblins? It was a big topic of discussion among the staff here until just a bit ago."

"Uh, I see." I didn't want to know what they were talking about specifically.

Maylene chuckled. "Don't worry, we weren't saying anything bad. Just that you have some talent, and that you dealt with all these jobs that nobody else wanted to do for a long time. You're held in high regard."

"That's good, I guess."

"So, you're powerful. But if you were able to leave the infamous Sea of Trees on your own, and if you trained hard enough to be able to do that, then it explains why you're so powerful. I hear that the monsters are a lot stronger and more aggressive than any old goblin."

"Sorry that took so long!" Paena said upon her return. I thought maybe she came back because she forgot something, but it was because she already finished the documents.

"All right, these look good."

"Thank you, Maylene! May I ask you to read the contract, then sign here and here, please?"

"Oh, sure."

I couldn't find anything wrong with the contract. All the conditions we discussed were present.

"Done, thank you."

"No problem! Here's proof of this exchange. You'll need to show this when receiving the documents, so please don't lose it."

"Understood," I said and put it in my Item Box. There was no way I could lose it there.

"That takes care of that, then. Oh, did you want to accept any jobs

today?”

“Yes, I do need to raise my rank. I’ll take even the most difficult jobs as long as they’re nearby, so can I ask for something that doesn’t demand much time? And that would help to raise my rank faster, if possible?”

“If you’re willing to take tough jobs, there should be a few. Actually, one moment, I’ll check,” Paena said and frantically left the room, then returned with one of the job postings. “Sorry about that! Here’s one. Just to be certain, you used space magic a minute ago, right? If you can do that, how about this?”

“Luggage delivery to Keleban? I know that place. There’s supposed to be a magic item market there soon. But why is the deadline ‘as soon as possible’?”

“Well, after they sent a carriage carrying their wares, they discovered that they forgot to pack some things. They hope to have it delivered by noon the day after tomorrow, but they won’t blame you for taking longer as long as it makes it to Keleban in the end. It was their mistake, so the job will only be considered a failure if you lose or damage the luggage on the way there. This request was only going to be valid until the next carriage was prepared, but since you can use space magic, maybe you could deliver it before that? Oh, I’m sorry I asked.”

“You don’t need to apologize! You did fine. Actually, you’ve done everything pretty much perfectly.”

She produced the documents incredibly fast, and she knew to bring me a job where space magic would be useful after she happened to see me use it. Even if the documents followed a format, she was still quicker than I would expect, and she could only have known to select this job by having the specifics of it memorized. She seemed kind of clumsy at first, but considering she had only been on the job for a week, she was pretty competent. I looked to Maylene, who gave me an awkward smile and nodded.

“Paena can do her job great, she’s just timid. If only she had more confidence.”

“I’m sorry.”

It sounded like she had her problems. But I had no complaints with the job she recommended, so I happily took it.



Chapter 3 Episode 17: The Dinome Magic Item Workshop

Two days later, I reached the gate to Keleban without being attacked once along the way.

“Excuse me, but do you know where the Dinome Magic Item Workshop is?” I asked the gate guard. “I believe it’s supposed to be around here.”

“Head east,” the guard answered. “Go straight down this road until you reach 24th Street, and then... Sorry, the roads around there are pretty convoluted. It’s hard to describe the exact directions in words.”

“It’s fine, you told me enough. Thank you.”

“Take care, then. Oh, actually, that carriage could take you there in a jiffy!”

I thanked the guard for the help, then walked up to the carriage he pointed out. It had no hood or seats, so it looked like a big cart for transporting goods. Nobody was in it but the coachman either, so I wasn’t sure this was the right carriage.

“Excuse me, how much would a trip to 24th Street cost?” I asked.

“24th? Two small bronze coins,” the coachman said.

“Here you are, then.”

“Get in the back. I was just about to leave.”

Once I boarded, the coachman got the carriage moving. I watched the streets slowly scroll by around me and listened to the hustle and bustle of the townsfolk. There were a lot of people on my last visit too, but now the crowds seemed even bigger.

“So where’d you come from, kid?” the coachman asked.

“Gimul,” I replied.

“Pretty nearby, eh? You here to do some sightseeing alone?”

“I’m an adventurer, but when I finish the request I’m here for, I’d love to see the sights. There’s a special market opening soon, isn’t there?”

“Yeah, tomorrow. It’s the magic item market this time.”

“Is there more than one big market event?”

“What, are you not from around here? Everyone in Gimul, hell, everyone in the whole region knows about the markets. There’s six of them a year. The main product changes every time, but it’s always held in the central square. There’s always all sorts of food carts and

stuff that open up around it too. They don't feel so special after you've lived here a few years, what with them creeping up on you every two months. They bring a lot of profit for us, though."

The carriage stopped to let tons of new passengers flood inside. We were packed together pretty tight.

"Hm? Hold onto something, folks!" The coachman shouted. "Might be a little bumpy ahead!"

The passengers grabbed onto the rim of the carriage. I followed suit, but I had no idea what was going on. Before I could figure it out, a smaller cart slowly drove by from ahead and to the right. It was full of barrels, and the driver was a fairly old man. Young men in other carriages yelled obscenities as they drove around him to pass by.

"Cripes, that's dangerous," our coachman muttered as he furrowed his brow. I had to admit that even to an amateur eye, the young men seemed somewhat aggressive with how they passed the old man. With that said, he was definitely slow and potentially obstructive. I didn't know exactly who the coachman was referring to as dangerous.

The other passengers started to get antsy as we approached the next stop and a middle-aged woman with the build of a sumo wrestler was there. She asked to be taken to 24th Street and got on the carriage. Everyone was dismayed by this, but especially me, because she tripped over and fell on me as she boarded. She apologized, but I told her I wasn't especially hurt. Then she sat right next to me, and the cramped carriage felt even more cramped.



The woman was nice enough to guide me to the Dinome Magic Item Workshop after we got off the carriage. I might never have found it otherwise, so I was glad I asked. I took my luggage and the job posting out of my Item Box, then walked through the door and saw a portly woman sitting at the counter. It would have been hard to call the store especially large. If I were to compare it to something, it was like a little shop you would find at a platform at a train station.

"Welcome!" the woman said. "Oh? What an adorable visitor we have. I've never seen you before. Are you an errand boy? You can get lamps or coals here, if those are what you need." She pointed to a shelf beneath the counter. It carried small magic items that were presumably merchandise. But unfortunately, I wasn't a customer.

"I'm an adventurer, actually, and I'm here to deliver something," I said. "Can you sign for this, please?"

"One moment, please," she answered. "Dad!"

"What?! Give me a sec!" someone shouted from elsewhere in the store.

"You'll have to give him a moment. He'll be here soon," the

woman explained.

A few minutes later, a bearded man appeared. "What do you want?" he asked.

"He delivered something," the woman said. "It's for you, so you should probably be the one to take it."

"He delivered something?" the man repeated. "Oh, the parts? And here I thought they wouldn't make it in time." He signed the job posting and gave it back to me. Now I just had to report back to the guild.

"Thank you," I said. "I'll be going, then."

"Wait," the man said. "You brought this from Gimul, right? If you're not in a hurry, how about staying for a cup of tea? We've only got cheap stuff, if that's all right with you. Hey, can you make the tea?"

"Coming right up," the woman said. The man who actually made the offer returned to the back of the store, leaving his daughter to do the job. I didn't want to let her work go to waste, so I stayed. When she finished the tea, I stood at one end of the counter to drink it. Strangely, it smelled like coffee.

"How do you like it?" she asked.

"It's delicious," I responded.

"That's great. This tea is sort of uncommon, so I wasn't too sure about it."

"It reminds me of something I've drank before. Is it made from roasted beans? Or the roots of a flower?"

"It's made from the roots of a dante flower, apparently. I don't know much about it, but it's supposed to be good for you," she said. That meant it was probably dandelion coffee, which brought back some memories. I used to drink this all the time back at the office, although with some extra touches.

"Where can you buy this?" I asked.

"You must really like it, huh? The old man who runs the drug store in the neighborhood always shares some with us, but he just makes it as a hobby. It's not for sale, I don't think."

I knew what they called the flower now, so I could just get a hold of some and make the coffee myself. From what I remembered of dandelion coffee on Earth, you were supposed to wash the roots and let them dry, then roast and boil them. It wasn't that hard.

"Thanks so much for this," I said when my cup was empty.

"No problem. Are you leaving already?" the woman asked.

"Yes, I have to find an inn for tonight. Thanks again, though," I said and turned to leave the store. But just as I put my hand on the doorknob, someone opened the door from outside. We both froze in place to avoid bumping into each other. That was when I saw who it

was and froze up even more. It was none other than Serge.

“Hello, Serge, what a coincidence,” I said. “I knew you were in town for the magic item market, but still.”

“Indeed,” Serge agreed. “Why are you here?”

“I delivered something for the adventurer’s guild. It was urgent, so I had to be a bit hasty.”

“Interesting. I’ve been going from place to place to say hello. I’m quite close with this workshop.”

The man from before returned to the front counter. “Serge! You’re finally here?” he said.

“Oh! Long time no see, Dinome,” Serge said.

“It’s only been a couple months. Well, I’m glad to see you’re doing OK. Do you know that kid?” the man asked and gave me a curious look.

“I’m Ryoma Takebayashi,” I said. “Serge has done a lot for me.”

“Oh, no, you’ve done a lot for me,” Serge said. “He’s as young as he looks, but he makes you want to stay on good terms with him. He’s interested in magic items too, apparently.”

“Is that right?” the bearded man said. “Surprised to hear Serge here give you such high praise. I’m Dinome. You can have a look inside, if you’re interested.”

“Can I?” I asked.

“Sure you can, that’s why I’m offering. I was going to show Serge either way.”

Before I could say anything else, Dinome headed to the back of the store. Serge followed along like he was used to this. I bowed to Dinome’s daughter, then tagged along.

The back room was larger than I could have imagined from the store itself. There were four vehicles that just looked like boxes with wheels stuck on. Presumably these were magimobiles. I saw assorted parts and work tables off to the edges of the room as well. On the opposite side of the room, there was a big door that must have been for accepting supply shipments, and a fairly large window as well. The room was bright and felt spacious.

“Don’t go around touching everything, but feel free to look,” Dinome said. “Serge, come with me.” Serge did as asked, and I didn’t know what else I should do, so I followed Serge. He was being told about the magimobiles.

“So this is the latest model?” Serge asked. “It doesn’t look that different.”

“Maybe not on the outside, but it’s got more power and a lighter frame,” Dinome explained. “Still doesn’t solve the big issue, though.”

“It can’t carry goods?”

“It can as long as they’re light. We’re in a bit of an awkward

position. Make the frame any lighter, and we'll have to worry about durability. It's not worth sacrificing safety."

"Yes, that's the problem. Races will always have collisions."

The subject of magimobile races came up a few times, so I thought they might be planning to enter one. Like maybe Dinome was the mechanic and Serge was the sponsor, something like that. I was able to follow the conversation at first, but eventually they started activating magic items and getting into deep, fanatical discussions. When they started talking about the number of revolutions the power source could do, I snuck off somewhere else.

I looked all around the workshop, but to be honest, I didn't know what I was looking at for the most part. I eventually found something a bit more normal. Amidst all the box-shaped magimobiles, there was what appeared to be an ordinary carriage. The one difference was that there was no way to tie a horse to this carriage, but there was a place for a coachman. It didn't seem to be a magimobile, but I thought it might be some other sort of magic item. I wanted to know more, so I waited for a chance to interrupt Dinome and Serge's conversation.

"Dinome, what kind of magic item is that?" I asked.

"That? Nothing magic about it, that's just a carriage. A neighbor asked me to fix it," Dinome said.

That made sense to me, but Serge was cocking his head. "Strange that you'd be willing to repair a regular carriage," he said.

"Yeah, well, you know," Dinome mumbled.

Before I could ask what he meant, Serge lowered his voice and told me. "He's softened up a lot since his grandchild was born a few years ago, but he always refused to touch anything but magic items in the past. If someone had a broken carriage, he'd tell them to go to a specialist for that."

"To tell you the truth, I wanted some money. It's for my grandkid," Dinome said, his face turning red.

"Are you buying him a gift? Then let me assist with that," Serge offered.

"Sorry, but no, it's tuition money."

"For the academy in the capital?"

"Right. As for why, well, let me tell you," Dinome said proudly, clearly eager to talk about this. "My grandkid might be a genius! He's still only four years old, but he comes over to hear us talk about work a lot, you know. My youngest disciple likes to act like a big brother and just explain every little thing to him. He hardly knows a thing himself, but anyway, take a look at this!"

Dinome could hardly contain his excitement as he took a few gears out of a drawer in a work table. He picked up one of them, set it on his palm, and let magical energy flow inside. It began to rotate like

the gear Serge gave me the other day. Compared to that one, though, this spun extremely slowly and periodically stopped before starting again.

“Judging by the conversation thus far, I’m guessing your grandchild made this,” I said.

“You got it, kid!” Dinome said. “Isn’t it something? Not good enough to sell, but remember, he’s only four.”

“So he’s good for his age?”

“You bet! I’ve carried him on my back while I worked when he was a baby, so maybe he learned from that at some point, but it was still a big surprise.”

“I can’t use enchanting magic, so I’m a bit jealous.”

You could never get a word in with people like this, but they were easy enough to deal with as long as you made it clear that you were listening. I followed that rule of thumb that I learned on Earth, ultimately listening to him brag about his grandchild for a while longer.

Chapter 3 Episode 18: Prototypes and Evaluations

I was walking through town with Serge after we weathered Dinome's bragging about his grandchild. Serge successfully changed the subject, so we managed to get out while the sun was still up.

"He quite liked you, Master Ryoma," Serge said. "That was an impressive display."

"I mostly just tried not to offend him. You, on the other hand, really know your way around a conversation," I replied. It sounded like we were complimenting each other on a successful heist.

"What are you going to do with that, by the way?"

"I'm not sure," I admitted. I was holding a small box containing a gear. Dinome gave it to me saying it was the first creation of a soon-to-be-famous magic item craftsman, but I didn't know what it was actually worth. "How talented do you think his grandson actually is?"

"Well, there are examples of young children who imitated their parents and learned magic naturally. It's rare, though, and may imply some talent. But whether he'll continue to display such talent in the future is a mystery."

"That sounds about right."

"Well, he may have gone soft now, but the old Dinome was hard to satisfy. That was just how seriously he took his work. He was hard on his disciples, too. Even through the eyes of a grandfather, if he sees potential, then I'm sure there's potential," Serge said. I prayed that the high expectations wouldn't weigh down his grandchild in the future.

"By the way, Serge, I was wondering why you don't have any bodyguards. Isn't it dangerous to walk around by yourself? I thought this city had a lot of crime," I said. I thought the head of a big company would have at least one guard, but I didn't see anyone. It didn't seem like any were hiding anywhere either.

"I've stayed in this city more times than I can count, and I've found that there's hardly any danger before dark. Security is enhanced during the markets, and there's no real threat of physical violence on the busy streets. If any pickpockets happen to catch me off guard, that's my fault. Besides, some of the people I've been visiting would hate if I dragged too many guests along. But in the event that something does happen, I'm prepared," Serge said and tapped his belt buckle. It looked like a classy, but otherwise ordinary belt.

“Is that a magic item?”

“Indeed. It’s part of my collection. By sending magical energy through it, I can instantly deploy a defensive barrier. And this bracelet can produce a smokescreen. Not only would it hide me temporarily, but it would draw a crowd who’d fear it was a fire. I have no way to fight, but plenty of ways to protect myself. Don’t worry.”

“I see,” I said. I wasn’t worried about walking around alone either, so it made sense.

“What will you be doing now, Master Ryoma?”

“First, I’d like to reserve a room at an inn. As long as I’m in town, I’d like to see tomorrow’s market before I go home.”

“Then I can tell you about the inn I’m using. It’s safe and it faces the main street, so if you go by carriage, you shouldn’t get lost.”

Now that I had that information, I headed to the inn. Serge still had people to greet, so we parted ways. But he did agree to show me around for dinner and for the market tomorrow.



Thirty minutes later I successfully reserved a room at the inn, but now I had nothing to do. Nothing was especially urgent, and the magic items would have to wait until tomorrow. I waited for Serge to get back so we could go to dinner. I had already fed my slimes too, so I was bored. I didn’t want to be away when Serge got here, so I couldn’t go anywhere. This trip made the convenience of cell phones that much more apparent. If only there was a magic item that worked like one.

Speaking of magic items, I decided to kill time by trying to make one. That spinning gear was still in my Item Box, and there was iron in my Dimension Home. I could use alchemy to reshape it to some extent. I didn’t know what I could make out of these parts, but hopefully something useful for everyday life. After thinking about it for a bit, plenty of options came to mind: a fan, an electric drill, a lawnmower, and more. I knew how to make an axis from my woodworking knowledge, since that included how to design a wheel. That meant I just had to prepare the other necessary parts and add the gear in. The gear itself revolved using magical energy, so it would be easy to use as the core of a machine. I started to work on that, thinking about what else I could make as I did.

“Master Ryoma, are you here?” Serge asked upon his return.

“Yes?!” I yelped, so immersed in my work that I was startled by his voice. “Welcome back, Serge. It’s dinner time, right? Sorry, can you give me a minute to clean up the room?” I rushed to put everything away. I didn’t want to make him wait too long, so I just stuffed it all in my Item Box. “Done.”

Serge led me to a bar full of muscular men. Most of the customers seemed to be physical laborers. I expected Serge to recommend some classy restaurant, but I seemed to be far off the mark. Maybe he was trying to pick something more to my tastes.

"The meat here is quite hearty," Serge explained. "It goes great with beer. Every time I come here, I end up overeating."

"Oh, Serge! Want to sit in the usual place?" a waitress asked. It sounded like Serge was a regular here.

"Yes, please."

"Got it. Oh, who's this adorable little boy? Is he your son?"

"His son?!" I exclaimed.

"He's a client," Serge said.

Maybe I did look young enough to be his son, but to actually hear someone point that out felt awkward. Serge looked sort of uncomfortable too.

"Then come to the second floor, please!" the waitress said.

We followed her up the stairs. When we opened the door, a refreshing gust of wind rushed through. The second floor had no walls or windows, just a roof and pillars. Through the gaps in the pillars, I could see the busy streets. That and the boisterous atmosphere made it feel like a beer garden. But the tables were divided by partitions made of tree bark, so there was some privacy.

"Do you know what you want to order?" the waitress asked.

"The usual for both of us, please," Serge said. "But before that, what beer is available today?"

"You're in luck, Serge. The head chef says we got some especially high-quality ale today."

"Then I'll start with some light appetizers and a mug of ale. Master Ryoma, do you want anything to drink?"

"I'll have what you're having," I said.

"You want ale? Would you like that in a glass?"

"No, a mug, please. Don't worry, I have Tekun's protection." I proved it by showing my status board.

"That means you get the first mug on the house!" the waitress said.

"Really?" I asked. It felt like I was getting a free drink just for showing my license. That didn't seem right to me.

"I can't believe someone with the God of Wine's blessing came the day we got some great drinks!"

"Restaurants live or die on the quality of their alcohol, and many of them have superstitions around this, you see," Serge explained.

"Then I'll be happy to accept the offer," I said. I could always pay later if I felt the need to.

"Thanks! I'll be right back," the waitress said, then walked off.

“It’s beautiful up here,” I said.

“This view gives you a good look at all the activity in this town, yes,” Serge agreed.

“And I don’t know if it’s because the one light here is so weak, but I can see all the stars in the sky. It’s like it naturally complements the artificial light.”

“That’s an interesting way of looking at it.”

“Here you are!” the waitress said upon her return. “Ale and appetizers.”

“That was fast,” I said.

“This restaurant is quick about these two items in particular,” Serge explained.

“People order these all the time!” the waitress said. “Enjoy, you two!” This restaurant seemed to be pretty efficient.

“Then let’s begin with the drinks, Master Ryoma. Cheers!” Serge said, and we raised our glasses and drank the ale. The instant it touched my tongue, the taste spread through my mouth. It had a fruity sweetness complemented by some sort of herbs. Tasty foam covered my tongue as the ale flowed down my throat. It wasn’t that bitter and the alcohol didn’t seem too strong, so I could keep guzzling it down.



“This is delicious!” I said.

“Indeed!” Serge agreed. “And it goes perfect with the appetizers. These are good too,” he said of the salted nuts that came as appetizers. They were lightly roasted and tasted a bit savory. The sweet taste of the ale combined with the salty, savory taste of the nuts was exquisite.

“I bet this would be great after a long day’s work.”

“This is only the beginning. Wait until the meat gets here,” Serge said. I needed to make sure I didn’t drink too much before then. “By the way, were those magic items that you had in your room?”

“You saw that? How embarrassing. I wanted to try making some myself.”

“Oh! What kind of item, if you wouldn’t mind telling me?” he said.

I had no reason to hide them, so I showed Serge a few of the smaller items I created. “What do you think?” I asked.

“You always have some peculiar ideas, Master Ryoma.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Take these ‘fans,’ for example. They blow air, correct? There are plenty of magic items used for ventilating air, but I’ve never seen one that spins these blades around to blow air. You could simply enchant something with wind magic to achieve the same effect. Everyone who works with magic items knows that. That would cut the cost of production on these blades, and make the product easier to mass-produce. Some further alterations could be made for ease of use or aesthetic appeal, but few craftsmen would assemble mechanisms like this.”

“I don’t think this is dissimilar to how magimobiles are made, though.”

“I felt the same way, but the history of magimobiles began from a historically important memo. It was full of ideas for magic items, and while it offered no ideas for specific designs, many of them have now been successfully created, and more continue to be invented to this day. Heaters and air conditioners, for example, were first suggested by this book. Cooler boxes, the magic items we use when we need to transport food and keep it fresh, were listed as well. I’ve heard that your store uses barrier magic and ice magic to preserve food, and while the method itself is different, cooler boxes serve the same purpose. Perhaps your ideas are similar to those provided by that memo.”

Judging by the names used, it was probably written by somebody from Earth, but I knew I couldn’t say that. “Well, it’s not easy to produce inventions that great,” I said instead.

“One of these is clever, actually. This one,” Serge said and pointed

to one of the magic items I set on the table. It looked like a bumpy toilet paper holder with a small comb stuck on it. Admittedly it looked pretty lame, but it was a music box of sorts. The gear inside the tube made it spin so the bumps on the outside would pluck the teeth of the comb part and play a nursery rhyme. But it was a simple melody, like hitting one key at a time on a piano.

“You really like this one?”

“Most definitely. As a collector, I have seen many magic items in my time, but a magic item that can automatically play music is fascinating. It has no particular use, but I think it would have plenty of sales value as a toy. There are quite a number of nobles who enjoy toys like these. If you simply made it look more appealing, I imagine it would sell decently enough,” Serge said, lowering his voice in a way that made him sound pretty serious about this.

On Earth, music boxes came to be what we know them as today back in 18th century Europe. But they were based on how church bells were rung to announce the time according to a college lecture I attended once, and that had been around much longer. They were operated manually at first, then they were made automatically, and clocks were added to make them into devices. That reminded me that the clock I received from the duke’s family was also a magic item, and that it didn’t have any complicated inner mechanisms.

“There are no magic items that can play sounds like this?” I asked. “I often hear church bells ringing, though. It would be an issue if those rung late. Don’t they use any devices to make sure that doesn’t happen?”

“Not that I can think of. There’s a magic item that will sound an alarm when a flute is played, but a magic item that performs music on its own? Commoners go to traveling entertainers and bards when they want music, and nobles employ musicians. Ringing the church bells is a job performed by monks and nuns, as part of their daily routine. They would never use a magic item instead. I haven’t checked every bell in the world, however,” Serge said. It sounded like I should assume there was no way to record audio, either. I considered the possibility of inventing the phonograph and records and seeing if that drew attention, but maybe some other time. Either way, now I knew that music boxes would be more valuable than I expected. “It didn’t seem like you were planning to sell this, but I think it would be a bit unfortunate if you didn’t.”

“How exactly would I go about selling these? I don’t think that’s something I’m capable of making enough to sell.”

“First, you would—”

“Your food’s ready!” the waitress announced as she walked over. “Here’s our specialty steak with herb butter.” The dishes were

steaming hot, and the smell of butter, herbs, and meat made me hungry.

“We can discuss it after we eat,” Serge said.

“That sounds fine. Also, I’d like another ale, please.”

Serge ordered more drinks as I rushed to clear away all my magic items.

Chapter 3 Episode 19: The Magic Item Market 1

After dinner, we returned to the inn in a pleasant mood. I gave my slimes some ale I bought as a gift, then we continued our previous conversation.

“For your music boxes, I think you would be best off leaving that matter entirely in someone else’s hands,” Serge said.

“That sounds like the only thing I could do,” I agreed. I couldn’t produce enough on my own, and didn’t have the knowledge required to mass-produce them. But that left the question of who I would ask for help. Serge’s company could put them up for sale, but I didn’t know who could create them.

“I have many ideas as to who you could ask, but why don’t you try approaching Dinome first?” Serge suggested. “He certainly has the skill required, and thanks to his work on magimobiles, he has an understanding of magic items like these. He also simply likes new things, so I think he would be a safe bet.”

“That makes sense, but wouldn’t this be a burden to him?”

“That depends on how you approach it, but I’m sure it will be fine. Dinome also has three disciples. Also, even I was able to understand the structure of this music box, so as soon as they’re put on sale, imitations will undoubtedly begin to circulate. To prevent that and defend your rights as the original creator, you would need a patent. I believe we discussed this with regards to the waterproof cloth.”

“Yes, I know all about patents.”

He had explained it before, but the patents were more or less the same as on Earth anyway. You requested one at the artisan’s guild, and if it was approved, you could clamp down on unpermitted use of your creation. But in order to do that, details about the product and all the technology used to produce it had to be shared with the entire artisan’s guild. They couldn’t restrict use of the product without that information, so you couldn’t refuse to share it if you wanted to request a patent. And if someone paid a usage fee and got permission, they could legally use the technology. Whether to get a patent and publicize everything about your creation or to keep it to yourself was up to the creator. In the case of my waterproof cloth, Serge provided an outlet to sell it and that made it easy enough to secure customers,

so I chose not to get a patent for that. It wouldn't be that bad if people found out how to make it anyway, since it might provide a little ray of hope for slimes.

"As soon as the music boxes go on sale, others will want to sell them too. There's some chance that Dinome will receive a huge rush of orders for music boxes and be burdened by that," Serge said.

"I suppose that makes sense."

Then Serge suggested that I should request a patent this time.

"Do you have some reservations?" he asked.

"You said that I would have to register with the artisan's guild first, right?"

"Yes, that's correct."

"I don't know about registering just for that. You know that I'm registered with the tamer's guild too. There are no jobs I can take, though. I feel kind of bad about being part of the guild without doing any work for them."

My limour birds could have delivered letters, but there were specialists who dealt in that, and it goes without saying that they had no jobs for slimes. Taylor was nice to me anyway, but that only made me feel worse. I wanted to at least do the lowest level work available, but between adventuring and running my store, my hands were full. Maybe I could squeeze it into my schedule somewhere, but the duke's family warned me not to overdo it, and I didn't want to disregard them. I couldn't believe that I was thinking like this now, though. Every time I had a task that could be taken care of by overexerting myself a bit, I threw myself at it to get it dealt with as soon as possible. Maybe I had grown.

"I've got an idea," I said. "If I'm going to have someone else manufacture the music boxes anyway, why not have him request the patent? That would save me some time."

"That's, well, it's possible, but I don't know if you should." Serge was suddenly grasping his head like there was some problem.

"Anybody is allowed to request the patent, but Dinome may object to the idea of stealing the fruits of someone else's labor." It sounded like his pride was the issue. "Besides, if you have someone else make the request in your place, you will not have the rights to your creation. In the worst case scenario, you may not even be able to profit off it. What do you think about that?"

If we wanted to talk about the proper rights holder, then it wasn't me and I had no right to profit off this invention anyway. It was somebody from ages ago on Earth. I just copied their creation here, and it turned out to be something that might be worth selling. And there was nobody around to criticize me. I was in a lucky position, but that was all. I didn't care that much about having the rights to music

boxes or profiting off of them. With that said, though, I didn't have the sense of justice or pride necessary to reject an opportunity sitting right in front of me. If I could use this for something, I would. I didn't want to dismiss Serge entirely, but that was my reasoning.

"Regardless of who does it in the end, I don't plan on taking that much of the profit," I answered. "But seeing as how I'll be asking someone who creates magic items, they may eventually have something that I need on an adventure. As long as I get favorable treatment when it comes to buying magic items off of them, that's all I need. Hopefully they'll be willing to cooperate, but if it turns out that they don't show me much respect, I actually have an idea for another, similar product."

"Not simply in that it plays a different song, I take it?"

"I don't even have a prototype for it, so I don't know if it'll work. But if it does, it could be even greater than the music box. Great enough to lower the music box's value," I said. Serge put his hand on his chin and thought about it.

Even at the store, I thought a bit about making a phonograph and records. They were first developed after the music box, and it's said that they even ended up taking the place of music boxes. If I could perfectly recreate them, I would have a hit on my hands.

"So if you do happen to lose your rights to the music box, you plan to outmatch it with this other invention?" Serge asked.

"It's possible, is all."

There were even magazines that came with simple phonograph construction kits meant for kids, so I had some knowledge of how to build one. It didn't seem like anything I wouldn't be able to make with magic. The bigger question was whether I could create records. I only had a vague idea of how to do that. Maybe I could make something that worked, but I didn't know if it would be good enough for it to catch on.

"If it's not able to outsell the music boxes, it would be due to my lack of judgment, foresight, knowledge, and skill," I said. "I'll deal with it if it happens." In the end, there was no knowing until I tried.

Serge sighed. "Very well, then we should discuss this assuming that's the course you will take."

"Are you sure?"

"It's fine. I'm a bit surprised, though." I wanted to ask what was so surprising, but he seemed to see the inquisitive look on my face. He smiled and answered me in advance. "For one, there's the fact that you have an idea even greater than the music box. But I also didn't expect you would be willing to use that idea to steal customers from a competitor. I thought you would prefer a more peaceful approach."

"That would generally be ideal, but I can take a more hardline

approach when I have to. Like when I'm attacked, for example. I'll admit that I have a tendency to take it easy, though."

"Perhaps I still have more to learn about people. It seems I misread you. But this is rather interesting."

"What are you talking about now?"

Serge chuckled. "I'm saying that now I expect even greater things from you in the future."

I didn't know what I said to make him think that. Maybe he was drunk. We had finished talking and I was starting to worry about him, so we called it for the night. I saw Serge to his room, confirmed that our plans were still on for tomorrow, then returned to my own room.



After a nice breakfast the next morning, we headed out to town. Main Street was even busier than yesterday. Carriages passed by right next to us on the narrow street as we pushed forward with a whole crowd of people on the sidewalk until we finally got to the central square. This was where each of the year's markets were held. There were lines of numerous tents. No carriages were allowed to enter. Any luggage in the carriages was moved to carts that were pulled around manually, allowing customers to walk around freely. Standing in front of all the tents, clerks shouted to us about their products. One claimed to have the latest magic items from the capital.

"I don't know where to go first," I said. "What should we do?"

"I simply go wherever catches my fancy," Serge said. "Is there something you're looking for in particular?"

"Not especially, but if there's something that could help with making a furnace at my house, or something that'd make it easier to maintain the mine, or just anything that'd be useful on journeys, I'd like that."

"Then let's search for magic items that fit the bill."

We wandered from tent to tent.

"Are these all farming tools?" I asked.

"Farming tools enchanted with physical enhancement magic, I believe," Serge said. "They make the job easier at the cost of mana. These are always in demand."

"Interesting. Something like this could help with maintenance."

"Welcome, do you want something?" the clerk said.

"Do you have any axes for chopping wood, or sickles for cutting grass?" I asked.

"We have a few types of axes, but this is the only sickle we've got."

"A scythe?"

"Regular sickles are small enough to handle easily without even

using the enhancements. We did have some in stock, but they sold out,” the clerk explained. It looked like it would work for cutting plants over a large area, so I would just have to get used to using it.

“That’s fine. I’ll take the scythe, an axe, and, oh, that pitchfork too.”

“One type uses a magic crystal, the other has to be powered by your mana. Which do you want?”

“The one that uses my mana.”

“That’ll be 29000 sute.”

“Here. I’d like change back, please.”

“Thank you, come again.”

I paid three small gold coins and got back one medium silver coin. I stuffed my purchases in my Item Box and moved on to the next store.

“What’s this store?” I asked. The function of their products wasn’t clear from their appearance.

“It seems this store is meant for workers,” Serge said. “For example, this is a magic item that would be used in construction.” He pointed to a metal stick with seven round bumps spaced out along it from top to bottom. I had no clue how this would be used. “Each of these round parts is enchanted with the earth magic spell called Break Rock, each at a different level of power. You would use them on a wall or stone from weakest to strongest in order to test its resistance to earth magic. You could use paint that resists earth magic, but if left neglected, it degrades over time and its effectiveness drastically reduces.”

“I didn’t know there were tools like this.”

“By the way, I checked all that stone you sold me using this exact item. Its resistance was quite decent.”

“That kind of brings back memories.”

“It hasn’t even been a year since then, has it? Wait, hm?”

“Is something wrong?”

“I found an interesting store.”

Serge headed to a corner of the market, where there were a few products set on a carpet. He stooped over to check them.

“May I look at these?” Serge asked the young man working at the store.

“Y-Yes!” he said, apparently nervous. He watched Serge closely examine the products.

“Are you the one who enchanted this mortar with Spin?” Serge asked.

“Yes! I enchanted everything here!”

“May I ask what workshop you work for?”

“Oh, none, at the moment.”

Serge smiled when he heard that. He bought the mortar, took out a piece of paper, and handed it over. The man looked at it, bowed his head deeply, and saw us off as we left his store.

“Serge, that looks heavy. I can put it in my Item Box for you,” I offered.

“Thank you.”

“It’s nothing. By the way, who was he?”

“Did you notice how his store didn’t have a tent? The tents are lent out by the market’s steering committee for workshops and large businesses who apply. When you see a store without a tent, that means it’s run by an individual. Sometimes they do it to express that they’re looking for someone to work for or train under. He was likely driven out of some workshop for being a poor learner. I can see that his enchantments are still rough, but this mortar does spin at a considerable speed. He appeared to take his work seriously, so if he finds a proper place to train, maybe he can change.”

“Was that sheet of paper a letter of introduction for some workshop?”

“Yes, for Dinome’s, in fact.”

“You want him to work on powering the magimobiles?”

“It does seem like he has that kind of potential.”

Even if he was hired, that would probably still be a long way off. I guess Serge wanted to take any chance he could get. We continued to chat as we walked around the magic item market.

Chapter 3 Episode 20: The Magic Item Market 2

“You there, adventurer!” a merchant shouted out, trying to draw people in. “What do you think of this quiver? It may look like any old quiver, but far from it. It’s enchanted with the Item Box spell, allowing it to hold up to three-hundred arrows! With this, you’ll never have to worry about running out of arrows while hunting! What’s that, you say? Wouldn’t you be all out after three-hundred? You don’t need to go hunting for that long, do you? If you can’t catch a single thing with three-hundred arrows, you better give up on archery!”

“How much does it cost?” asked a man who appeared to be an adventurer.

“You can have it for as little as two-hundred-thousand sute!” As soon as the price was announced, customers started to leave.

“That sounds a little too expensive,” I said. “What do you think?”

“I wouldn’t say it’s that excessive,” Serge replied. “Creating magic items requires the craftsman to know both enchanting magic and the spell that they would like to enchant their item with. That is to say that a craftsman can’t enchant items with spells they don’t know. Space magic is among the most difficult types of elemental magic to learn, so few magic item craftsmen can enchant their items with it, and those items go for a high price. But that quiver, much like the farming tools you purchased, will last for months or years. It may feel expensive at first, but if you take good care of your magic items, they’ll prove their worth.”

“I see.”

“Hey, kid, you interested in magic?” a man from another store said. “We’ve got some good stuff.”

“What are these?” I asked. His store had bundles of books tied together with string that were sold as a set with metal sticks. There were tones of them.

“These magic items are for education purposes,” Serge explained. “You can get a feel for a spell by using the magic item and the book that comes with it to help you learn. However, these don’t appear to be published by the magic guild.”

“I swear they’re not illegal,” the man claimed.

“I know that creating and selling your own teaching tools isn’t illegal. But if the guild hasn’t approved your work, then it’s difficult to

trust you, I'm afraid. I have no way of knowing whether your books have proper lessons, or if your magic items function as intended. If I could test your items and check your books before buying, of course, that would be different."

"No, you can't! Pay first if you want to read."

"Then this isn't worth discussing. Let's go, Master Ryoma."

"There are certainly a lot of different stores, good and bad," I said.

"Indeed. That makes it all the more exciting to find quality goods. Oh, Master Ryoma, look over there." I turned and saw Dinome. He was under a fairly large tent, giving instructions to his daughter and a man who I presumed to be his disciple. "Shall we go say hello and continue yesterday's discussion?"

"Isn't he busy?"

"It doesn't look like it. See?"

"Oh, yeah." On closer inspection, I saw a small child clinging to his leg. Once he was done giving instructions, he sat on a wooden box and began to stroke the child's head, an adoring look on his face. "That's his grandson, Fedele, right? I guess he's letting his family handle customers for him. Won't he get mad if we interrupt this too, though?"

"He isn't that petty. It's about work, I'm sure it will be fine. He will generally listen to you as long as he's not in the middle of work. More importantly, Master Ryoma, I believe you can use barrier magic to block out sound. May I ask that you cast that?"

"Of course." This involved me, so I had no reason to refuse.

When we headed toward the tent, the disciple noticed us and bowed. "Pops! Serge is here!" he said.

"Hm? Well, if it isn't Serge and Ryoma?!" Dinome greeted us jovially. "Good to see you. Look, this is Fedele, the grandson I told you about yesterday. What do you think of him?"

"Hello, I'm Ryoma," I said to the small boy.

"Ryoma?" he repeated, unsure of what to make of me.

"He's adorable."

"Right?!" Dinome agreed. "But he's got this sharp look in his eyes."

"Dinome, we can see that your grandson is cute. You don't need to tell us," Serge said. "There is actually something that we'd like to discuss."

"Oh? You should've said so sooner. Come with me." Dinome led us to some chairs in a corner of the tent. They were probably using it as a rest spot. It wasn't that spacious, but it seemed good enough for us to chat in.

"Uh, what is it?" I asked Fedele, who was clinging to my clothes for some reason.

“Ryoma, can we play?” he requested sweetly.

“Oh, looks like Fedele likes you,” Dinome said.

“Can we play?”

I turned to Serge for his thoughts. “I suppose I can handle this discussion myself. Go play with the boy,” he said.

“Dinome, you wouldn’t mind?” I asked.

“You’ll probably just be bored here anyway,” he said. When it came to negotiations, leaving everything to Serge would likely turn out fine. I just did as discussed earlier and put up a soundproof barrier.

“You can use barrier magic?” Dinome asked me.

“Yes, and now nobody outside will hear you speak. I’ll be playing with Fedele, so take care of business here, please,” I said. Dinome was a bit shocked as I walked outside the barrier with Fedele. Which was actually still inside the tent. “Now, what do you want to do?”

“Let’s play the word chain game!” Fedele proposed. “I’ll start with ‘item,’ so you need a word that starts with the letter M.” It sounded like the rules were the same as on Earth. I played along until eventually he lost. “Darn! Let’s play again! Starting with the letter M again!”

“All right!”

At some point, I started to wonder how long I’d have to play this game for. I tried to win only one in three matches, but I was on my fifteenth win. I wasn’t keeping track, but we had to have played over forty games total. It had been something like two hours. Most of the words we used now were used in previous games. At least it looked like he was having fun.

“Thank you for looking after him for me. Here’s something for you,” Dinome’s daughter said and handed me a drink. I thanked her and gulped some down. The cold fruit juice quenched my thirst.

“Ryoma, say a word that starts with M.”

“That’s enough, Fedele. Ryoma needs a break,” the daughter said, chiding her child.

“I’m fine,” I said. After having that drink, I felt like I could keep going for a while.

“Really? You’re not bored? My dad would be delighted, but you don’t have to keep playing along.”

I couldn’t hear Serge or Dinome due to the barrier, but they looked over at us sometimes. I wondered if the negotiations were difficult. I didn’t want to interrupt them with anything.

“Ryoma, M!” Fedele screamed.

“Right. ‘Mischief.’”

“Fedele.” Apparently you were allowed to use your own name. This went on for another three matches. “Next! Start with M again!”

“You really love this game, huh?”

“Not really.”

“What? You don’t like it?”

“I don’t *not* like it, but I don’t *love* it.”

“Uh, is there something you’d rather do, then?”

“I wanna go outside! But they say I’m not allowed to go by myself. And I don’t have any toys, so what else can I do?!” He was enjoying it so much that I just assumed he loved the game, but evidently not. I should have asked sooner.

“Want to play a different game?”

“Yeah!” That was a great response, considering I hadn’t even described the game yet.

“Excuse me, do you mind if I borrow this trash can?” I asked his mother.

“This? Go ahead.”

“Thank you.”

I took a cloth out of my Item Box and stretched it over the top of the cylindrical trash can, then set it in place with string.

“What’s this for?” Fedele asked.

“This is the playing field. Have you ever heard of a game called beigoma?” Beigoma is a game where both players spin a top on a playing field like this and try to knock the other player’s top out. Most people in Japan would at least know the name, but I didn’t know if the children in this world were aware of the game. Some children in Japan nowadays wouldn’t know about it either, but back when I was a kid, it was still popular. The actual tops were supposed to be made of lead, but I made mine while I was creating magic items yesterday, so I used the iron I had on hand. I had two tops, and two strings to spin them with. When I took them out of my Item Box and set them on the playing field, Fedele stared at them closely. He didn’t seem to know what they were, but he was interested. “Here’s how it works. Watch this!”

“Oh!” Fedele cried. It had been a while since I played, but I still remembered how to spin the tops thanks to muscle memory. My top traveled in circles over the playing field as it slowly approached the center. “It spun!”

“Do you want to try, Fedele? I can teach you how to do it.”

“Yeah! I wanna learn!”

“Then first, you need to learn how to wrap the string around the top properly.” I taught him the most basic method of doing it, but it was still too hard for a four-year-old. He kept messing it up, so I handed him one with the string wrapped around it already before he got bored. “Here’s how you unleash it!”

“Lemme try! Oops.”

“You need to pull a little harder.” I stood between him and the store so he wouldn’t accidentally send a top flying into something. Then we practiced until Serge and Dinome exited the barrier and approached us.

“I’m sorry we took so long,” Serge said.

“Fedele! Grandpa’s done with work!” Dinome proclaimed.

“Serge, how did it go?” I asked.

“It went fine,” he said. “Dinome accepted the conditions we discussed last night.”

“I see. Thank you, Serge. You too, Dinome.”

“No problem,” Dinome said. “We’ll make some money, and you won’t have quite so much work to do. Seems fair to me, but we won’t know who’s getting the better deal until we know how this thing sells. If you ever want to ask about magic items, I’m available unless I’m busy with work. Come stop by my store when you need to.”

“Grampa, spin this!” Fedele demanded.

“Oh? What the heck is this? You know, Serge?”

“It looks like a tornero, but I’m not certain,” Serge said.

“It’s called a beigoma,” I corrected him. “What’s a tornero?”

“It’s a similar toy but bigger, made of wood, and with a stick sticking out of the middle. To play with it, you hold the stick with both hands and spin it like this.” Serge gestured like he was spinning a bamboo-copter.

“The way you use this is you wrap a string around this part, then let it rip! Like this.”

“It does seem like a type of tornero to me. Some regions have vastly different types. Is this from your homeland?”

“Yes.”

“I suppose this is how they are in the Sea of Trees, then.”

“Spin it!” Fedele cried.

“Sure thing,” Dinome said. “Ryoma, is this what you’re supposed to do with the string?”

“Looks good,” I said.

“And this is how you spin it?!”

“Oh, yes.”

“It spun!” Fedele shouted. The top spun around on the playing field.

“Did you already know about beigoma, Dinome?” I asked.

“Nah, I just watched you do this a minute ago. That’s all I need to figure out a simple toy like this!”

“Grampa, you’re so awesome!”

“Oh yeah? Thanks!”

I thought it was impressive too, but his grandson’s praise immediately made him bashful. I decided I might as well let them

have the tops.

“You sure we can take these?” Dinome asked.

“Yes, you can teach Fedele how to play with them. Once you’re both able to do it, you can play together by unleashing both your tops at once and letting them clash. You want to play with your grandpa, don’t you, Fedele?”

“Yeah!”

“I gotcha!” Dinome said. “Then I’ll take them, thanks. Don’t know if this’ll be enough to repay you, but do you have plans tonight?”

“Not really.”

“Well, we’re celebrating after the market closes today. You two can come on over if you feel like it.”

We were going to be working with each other for a while, so I decided it would be best to take his offer. Thus, I gained a connection with a magic item craftsman.

Chapter 3 Episode 21: Experiment

Two days later, Serge stayed in town for some unfinished business while I headed back to Gimul. I arrived late at night, so I went straight home. After I took care of my familiars, I just wanted to go to sleep, but something stopped me. I was in a room in the mine with a cleaner slime that I had taken from the store the other day, and its evolution was beginning sooner than expected. There was no way I could sleep through that. Each time the cleaner released and absorbed magical energy, its transparent body darkened bit by bit. I couldn't wait to see it fully evolved.

Eventually, the magical energy settled down and the slime started to crawl around the room. Its body was pure black without the least bit of luster, like it was made of crushed charcoal condensed into a ball. But upon closer inspection, it had the same gelatinous consistency as any other slime. I used Monster Appraisal to check its species.

Deodorant Slime

Skills: *Absorb Odor (8), Displace Odor (6), Deodorize (8), Resist Odor (5), Stench Release (2), Irritant Odor Release (2), Odor-Absorbing Solution (7), Odor-Displacing Solution (5), Deodorant Solution (4), Stench Solution (1), Irritant Odor Solution (1), Disease Resistance (5), Poison Resistance (5), Physical Attack Resistance (1), Cleanse (4), Cleanliness (4), Sanitation Work (1), Jump (3), Split (1)*

I thought I would be getting a carbon slime or something, but this wasn't bad. Its abilities seemed very specifically centered around smells. I wanted to test what it could do, but if it was going to involve a lot of odors, I decided that it would be best to take it outside.



After some research, I discovered how a few of its skills worked. Absorb Odor made it suck up any smells in the air. Displace Odor sucked up the smell of any object it came in contact with. These two were similar, but the range of their effects differed. Deodorize eliminated odors entirely, and Resist Odor put a restraint on smells to prevent them from being transferred between objects. Stench Release worked the same as it did with scavengers, unleashing a terrible odor.

Irritant Odor Release was the same except that the odor was now an irritant. It wasn't toxic, but even a little whiff of it was enough to make my eyes water, so I had to be careful with that. If this skill leveled up enough, it might be effective as tear gas. All of the skills with 'solution' in the name just produced fluids with the same effects as the related skills. All of these fluids were as dark as the slime and highly sticky, so it might be more accurate to call them mud. Its other skills were shared with cleaner slimes and worked the same way. Lastly, it seemed to consume both charcoal and filth, and wasn't picky about which. That might have been why it wasn't specifically a carbon-based slime.

I collected its solutions to study more thoroughly, aside from the smelly ones. I also got some deodorant solution from a cleaner slime for comparison's sake, then used chemicals and the Appraisal skill to check them out. The deodorant slime's version of the fluid was a little different. Caulkin's team and I had researched the cleaner's deodorant solution and ultimately put it up for sale at the store. We sold a few varieties based on strength, with the weakest being Normal, the next strongest being Super, and the strongest being Hyper, which was the undiluted solution. They were all used by splashing or spreading them on a surface, but if you did that with the deodorant slime's solution, it made the surface all black and grimy. It would be hard to use this on clothes, but unlike the cleaner slime's version, this could be mixed with other solutions. I didn't know why, but the cleaner slime's deodorant solution became far less deodorizing when mixed with water or other fluids. That was why I had to ask the cleaner slimes to dilute the three different solutions we had on sale within their own bodies. Maybe the charcoal made the solution more stable, but appraising it didn't give me an answer. It remained a mystery, but new possibilities showed themselves.

Next, I wanted to check the odor-absorbing and displacing solutions. The cleaner slime's deodorant solution had another problem too. While it was extremely effective, I did get a complaint about it from a cat beastwoman who bought a ton. She said it helped to deodorize the garbage dump, but the next time garbage piled up, it was smelly again. It was also useful for eliminating the stench from shoes, but that odor built up again after wearing them for long enough. The cleaner slime solution could deodorize only what it touched and the area around it. It didn't last that long either, so it could be difficult to use in large environments that frequently received new odorous material. The deodorant solution was big with beastkin who had a strong sense of smell, and if I could release a product that handled the stench that this one failed to, it would mean even greater profit.

There was still the question of how long the odor-absorbing and displacing solutions lasted and how effective they were. I could check their effectiveness soon enough, but their duration would take some time to test. I also had to check if they would work in a regular home, rather than just the mine, but I had done enough testing for one day. I went to wash myself up, and by the time I was done, it was time to go to work.



“So there you have it,” I said after reporting everything I’d done that morning.

“And that’s why you came to work without getting a minute of sleep?” Carme asked, appalled.

“I just couldn’t stop myself. So, would you mind if I perform this experiment at the store?”

“Does this bag contain that odor-absorbing solution? As long as it isn’t dangerous, I don’t see why not.”

“I want to see if the odor-absorbing solution will be effective in this state, and if it’ll last long enough in an environment where people are often up and about, so I’ll just need to leave it sitting out for a while. I’ve confirmed that it keeps the odors that it absorbs, but there seems to be a limit to how much it can contain. A scavenger slime’s stench can instantly push it to the limit.”

“And it stops working when that happens?”

“Yes. The scavenger slime stench may just be too powerful, so I’m going to try leaving this in a few places to collect data. It’s not poisonous, so it won’t be dangerous.”

“Then I have no reason to object. If all goes well, it could give us a new product to sell. I hope you find positive results.”

“Then I’ll be going for the day. I need to go around seeing who else will help with my experiment. Oh, I almost forgot. Here’s a souvenir. I heard in Keleban that these pastries have been popular there lately. I tried some, and they’ve got a nice, mildly sweet taste.”

“Thank you, I’m sure the women will love them.”

I asked Carme to hand out the pastries, then went to the florist next door.

“Hello, Pauline.”

“Oh, if it isn’t Ryoma. I haven’t seen you around lately. How have you been?”

“I was in Lenaf and Keleban for a while, but I’m fine, of course. I got a souvenir for you. They’re pastries and they won’t last too long, so eat them while they’re still fresh.”

“My, these look great. Thank you. The kids will be delighted. Are you here just to give me these?”

I asked her if I could test the odor-absorbing fluid here.

"Sounds good," she said, giving me a second affirmative response. "I use your services all the time, so it's the least I can do. This new product sounds like something to look forward to, too. If you just want to leave a little bag sitting out here, that's fine by me."

"Thank you. If there are any problems, please tell me. I can use that information to make an even better product in the end."

"Well, if anything happens, I'm more than happy to complain," Pauline said with a hearty laugh.

"Oh, there's one more thing I wanted to ask about. Do you have any dante flowers?"

"We just got some this morning."

Pauline headed over to the flowers, grabbed a container, and came back. It held a bouquet of a few dozen yellow flowers. Both the stems and flowers were big, and they had petals, but the color made them look like dandelions. I found the flowers I was looking for, but when I looked closer, it turned out that all the roots were cut off, and that was what I actually wanted.

"Where are the roots?" I asked.

"I cut them off and threw them out after we got the flowers. What, do you need the roots?"

"Yes, there's a drink you can make by boiling dante roots, and it tastes similar to something from my homeland."

"Sorry, but the roots from today's flowers were already tossed out. It'll be a while till the next shipment gets here. Wait, didn't you make grass grow before? Meaning you can use wood magic?"

"I can, why do you ask?"

"How about doing the same with these dante seeds? If not that, it'll be about a week before more flowers arrive at the store."

"The seeds will be plenty. How much do they cost?"

"Fifty sute for a bag."

Pauline showed me the inside of the bag. It contained dozens of seeds that resembled sunflower seeds. That may not have been enough to make coffee with, however.

"It might take more than one bag," I said.

"These are just for people who want to grow them as a hobby, really, so they're not sold in bulk. I think we've got thirty bags' worth of those seeds in storage."

"Well, I'd like to experiment with them first. Ten bags for now, please."

"Gotcha, I'll get those ready right away."

If I had ten bags of seeds to grow, then even assuming some inevitable failures, I would still come out with a decent amount. I could try to mass-produce dante flowers after I knew for sure what I

could do.

Pauline took five-hundred sute for the bags. “Thanks. If you’ll be using wood magic, make sure they don’t get magicified.”

“What does that mean?”

“When you make plants grow with wood magic, sometimes it does weird things to them. There’s a great scholar who has some more complicated name for this, but anyway, it can make the shape or color different than it’s supposed to be, make it poisonous, or even cause the plant to move on its own like it was a monster. The magical energy seems to cause it. Some plants are more prone to being magicified than others, but you’d need to ask an expert for the specifics.”

“Interesting, that’s the first I’ve heard of this.”

Pauline chuckled. “Well, you’d either need to have a bunch of people cast the spell, or to use a ton of magical energy for that to happen, apparently. It doesn’t happen too often, so I wouldn’t worry about it. Anyway, if these drinks you’re making turn out good, tell me about them. I’ll order more dante flowers and seeds as long as you keep buying them.”

“Thank you, I’ll keep that in mind.”

Magification sounded like it could result in a number of different transformations, and I was a little curious as to what could be done with that. It would be worth experimenting with eventually, but for now, the dandelion coffee came first. I put the seeds away in my Item Box and left the florist.

Next, I went to the butcher and asked them to let me test the odor-absorbing solution, then received some blood from them as well. After that, I went to Miya’s house, then Leipin’s, and everyone else who might conceivably welcome my experiment.

Chapter 3 Episode 22: Making Charcoal

I decided to use the entirety of the next day looking after the mine and making charcoal. I had been using my stockpile of charcoal thus far, but it was starting to run out. If I didn't produce more before it was all gone, I wouldn't have any to feed to the deodorant slime. The weeds I had harvested the other day were starting to look good, so it was about time to use them. We had a number of consecutive days without rain, so while I had planned to finish drying the weeds with alchemy, they turned out to be fully dried already.

I raked the weeds into a pile with my recently purchased pitchfork. By sending magical energy into a metal fixture on the handle, this tool automatically triggered the Physical Enhancement spell. It made the pitchfork feel weightless in my hands, as if it had disappeared. It made the job of piling up the weeds into a breeze. Particularly when I shoved the pile into my Dimension Home, it was so much simpler than it could have been. It was actually pretty fun.

Next, I wanted to harvest some weeds to be used for next time. I reached into my Item Box and pulled out the scythe. These had a tendency to be used as weapons in light novels, but this was a farming tool. It looked like a one-handed sickle but bigger. Sticking out of the handle, there were two rods that ran parallel with the blade. They each had a metal fixture like the pitchfork did, so I grabbed the scythe by those rods and held it parallel to the ground. I kept the blade facing forward and let it rest on the ground. I had never used a scythe before, but I was pretty sure this was right. I pushed my right hand forward and pulled my left hand back. The blade just pushed past most of the weeds, but a few were cut, so this seemed to be correct. The rest would come down to practice.

After an hour of trial and error, I was gradually getting more efficient. The most important part was the arc of the blade, much like when wielding a katana. When swinging, it was better to focus on the twisting of the hips than on the arms. All my arms had to do was maintain their grip. The part that hit the weeds also needed close to the tip of the blade. As long as I kept these tips in mind, the blade easily cut through the plants. Twisting my hips as I swung also gave me more range per swing. One-handed sickles only let you cut the plants right by you, so this was more efficient and more fun. It was a

pretty solid purchase.

I decided to stop harvesting weeds for now and instead chop down some trees near the base of the mountain so I could have some wood for the charcoal. This, of course, called for the magic axe. Axes are fairly heavy, which is why they can exert such force, but thanks to the magic item applied to this axe, it could be easily wielded without removing any of the weight. I personally found these sorts of spells much more useful than offensive magic.

I wanted about four or five trees, which would have to be cut down and then carried to the mine. Then I would just need to chop off all the branches, cut them down into more usable chunks, and burn them. But then I noticed that the sun had risen to its apex and thought it might be a good time to take a break and have lunch.

Just then, I heard a sound. I stepped to the side, and a moment later, an iron ball flew right past my head. I told the iron ball, which happened to be my iron slime, to be more careful. It responded by sitting in place and not moving at all. When I told it that it could go, it went up the path to the mine, turned back into a ball, and rolled back down.

My iron and metal slimes had grown in unexpected ways as of late. I noticed it when they attended me to slay monsters around the mine. They seemed to have learned to turn into balls when I petted them. We practiced it for a while, and the metal slimes figured it out first, then the iron slimes. I just thought it meant that I was getting better at training them, but a few days later, the metal and iron slimes figured out how to freely roll around in ball form. After some research, I found that while their bodies were made of hard, heavy metal, their cores could swiftly move around inside, so the core could adjust their center of gravity and send them tumbling in the intended direction. I think it all started from a coincidence, but it led to them learning a faster way to move. They were the slowest of my slimes before, but now they were among the fastest. Not only that, but they both learned a new skill called Rapid Movement. They were only fast on flat surfaces or downward slopes, though. If they tried to climb a hill, gravity would force them back down. The slimes seemed to find that fun, however, and they spent a lot of time going up and down hills. Sometimes they would accidentally be sent flying, like what just happened. And they were made of metal, so that was pretty dangerous. Also, the abundant food I fed my metal and iron slimes caused them to increase in number day after day. All of them learned to roll. I considered trying to set up a course for them to roll through somewhere around the mine at some point.



After lunch, it was finally time to make the charcoal. First, I stuffed chunks of wood into the furnace, then piled the dried weeds and chopped branches on top. Next, I ignited the plants with a magic item for lighting fires that Dinome gave me for free. It placed a fair amount of distance between the user and the fire, making it easy to use. After that, I waited at the entrance for the heat to spread throughout the furnace. Eventually, white smoke began to rise up the chimney. I kept waiting until the billowing smoke became transparent and a little blue. Once the smoke had changed, I blocked up the chimney and entrance with rocks and red clay to limit the airflow. It was easier said than done thanks to how precise the timing needed to be.

I only started making charcoal after I came to this world. On Earth I didn't have enough time or the right environment to do it, so I could only watch how-to videos online or on TV and wish that I could try it one day. Those memories were the only information I had to go on, so I had accidentally let the fire go too long or put it out too early several times. By now, I had gotten it down. I knew from experience that it would still take a while before the smoke changed, so I could take my time watching it. It got a bit boring just standing around, though.

I started to think about how to get ready for my trip to the Sea of Trees of Syrus. I planned on collecting information and slaying monsters to prepare already, but it was hard to say that would be enough. A half-hearted effort probably wasn't going to cut it, and I wanted to polish my skills. I thought of four different ways I could get ready for the journey.

First, I could enhance my equipment. I primarily fought in close combat, so I wanted good weapons and armor. This idea was pretty basic.

Second, I could practice magic and develop new spells. Daily life spells were one thing, but my offensive magic capabilities honestly weren't that great. I could use every element, but an experienced adventurer with magic as their focus could do a lot more than that. All I could do to improve was train. One thing that did give me an advantage, though, was my knowledge from Earth. That could potentially help to create some useful spells. I needed to learn what spells I would actually want and what kind of environment I'd be fighting in, however, so I had to wait until I got the documents from the guild.

Third, I could research medicine and poison. When I arrived in this world, I received knowledge of medicine. I only ever used it to create beneficial drugs thus far, but it could also be used to make poison. My poison and medicine slimes could also help. If I acted now, I could order all the materials I needed and get them quickly enough.

Creating poison to be used in combat might be worthwhile.

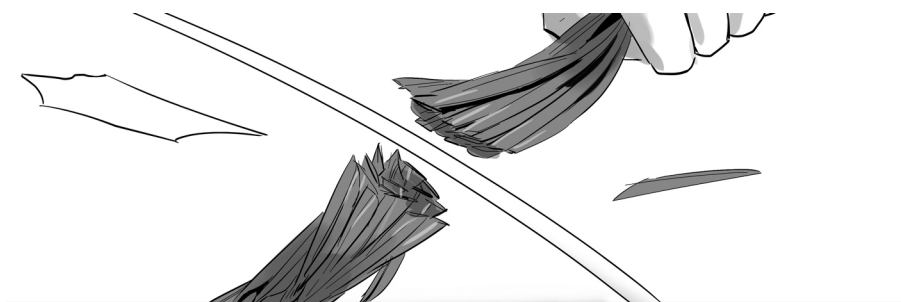
Thankfully I could ask Glissela, Fay, and Lilyn for advice about this.

Fourth, I could develop new items. Or maybe 'new' wasn't the right word for it, but I could make survival tools and such from Earth that might help, assuming that they could be recreated from materials in this world. If it was something that already existed here, then that would be fine too, but if it didn't and it'd be of use to people here, I could do a lot with it. I had no concrete ideas for what to make, however.

I heard a loud, metallic sound from far away. An iron or metal slime must have fallen again. I knew that falling didn't harm them, so I wasn't that worried about it, but I wished that they would try not to do it so much. I knew that their newfound ability to travel quickly made them happy and excited, but still. Then it occurred to me that this transformation was similar to how other slimes could sprout tentacles. Since they were made of metal, maybe it would be possible for these slimes to sprout blades or other weapons. If I could teach them to roll into balls, I assumed I could teach them to take on other shapes too. Now I had to give it a try.

I called the metal and iron slimes over and kept an eye on the furnace as I tried getting the iron slime to form a knife. It looked like this would work. After becoming a ball for days in a row, the slime itself appeared to have improved its skills. By guiding it with my hand, it didn't take long to get it into the approximate shape I wanted. All that remained was to hammer out the finer details and make the blade thinner. Once I was done, I commanded the slime to sit still, then saw if I could use it to chop a bundle of dried weeds. When I saw the results, I could tell I had a dopey grin on my face.

The iron slime knife's blade was phenomenally poor and did not cut well. It was uneven and twisted in some places. If this were to be sold at a store, it would be the cheapest of trash. With that said, it still managed to cut the bundle of weeds. I sort of had to use the blade like a saw to get it all the way through, but the end result was the same. If I could make this blade sharper and iron out the kinks, I thought I might have something here. As I waited for the charcoal to finish, I continued to polish the iron and metal slimes. I very nearly messed up and left the charcoal burning too long, but thankfully noticed in time.



Chapter 3 Episode 23: In Town

When I went to the store the next morning, Carme told me that I had a visitor. It was Miya, and she wanted to tell me about the experiment. I headed to the reception room to speak with her.

“Ryoma! There you are!” Miya cried as I arrived.

“Good morning, Miya. I’m sorry about the wait.”

“Sorry I just showed up with no prior notice. I’d really love more of that odor-absorbing solution, though.”

“Did the solution I gave you wear off already?”

Miya told me more about it, It sounded like it lasted from when I gave it to her in the afternoon two days ago up until last night, approximately one day.

“But it was working yesterday morning?” I asked.

“Definitely, this stuff’s purrfect. It totally got rid of the stench at the dump. The air was so refreshing that I even took deep breaths. All the neighbors who came to throw out their trash were looking at me funny.”

“Uh-huh.” I could imagine why.

“But when they got closer to the dump and noticed there was no stench, they got what I was doing. And since they didn’t smell garbage then, the solution had to be working in the morning.”

“I see. It’s only effective for a day, though? I knew it wouldn’t last long.”

“Meow? You did?”

“To an extent, yes.”

In my experiments immediately after I got the deodorant slime, I learned that the effects of its solutions were limited. One example could be seen by appraising the bag of odor-absorbing solution.

Odor-Absorbing Solution Bag

A bag full of odor-absorbing solution from a deodorant slime. The solution has taken in as much odor as possible, so it’s no longer effective.

The amount that this fluid could absorb was relatively small. While it lasted longer than a cleaner slime’s deodorant solution, I only expected it to work for maybe a week at the longest.

“I experimented with a scavenger slime’s powerful stench, though, so I didn’t know how long it might last in other circumstances. That

was why I wanted you to help me collect data,” I said.

“I see. So you don’t have anything that’ll last longer.”

“Do you want to test this odor-displacing solution?”

In an experiment where a placed the same amount of solution in the scavenger slime’s stench, the odor-displacing solution lasted close to an hour while the odor-absorbing solution only lasted a few minutes. But at the same time, the odor-displacing solution wasn’t as effective at taking in odors from the surrounding air. It persisted for longer, but had a lower range of effect. That was what defined this solution.

“Sure thing,” Miya said. “Should I put it in the same place as the last one?”

“Please do.”

“You can count on me. I personally hope you finish making this stuff soon, so I’ll help however I can!”

Miya took a bag of odor-displacing solution and went home. I was actually already starting to imagine what this product would look like in its finished form. The answer was right in front of me. I looked to that answer, the deodorant slime, and it quivered. I don’t need to explain everything about the deodorant slime again, but it was capable of mixing its solutions together inside its own body, and they had the same effects as the solutions it could spit up. The solutions that it did spit up also different from that of the cleaner slimes in that they could be combined and diluted without diminishing the effects. In that case, I wondered what would happen if I mixed them together. The odor-absorbing solution was highly effective at gathering odorous materials from the surrounding air. The odor-displacing solution could accumulate tons of odorous material, as well as take it from other objects. If I combined these two solutions, it seemed like they could cancel out each other’s weaknesses. Maybe I could also use these for some other materials. My one deodorant slime wasn’t enough to turn this idea into a product for now, though, so that would be a while off.

The deodorant slime started trying to consume the used bag of odor-absorbing solution from off the desk. It seemed like it wanted to eat the absorbed stench. Maybe this solution was meant to act as a trap for capturing deodorant slime food. I passed the time thinking about the deodorant slime.



After I finished work and had lunch, I went around town visiting everyone helping with my experiment to ask how it was going. The solution was still effective for everyone except Miya. Her house was in a uniquely bad location, so that must have been it. Even the solution at the butcher was still working, so Miya’s house had to absolutely

reek. Not to be rude or anything. Anyway, as I was thinking about that, I got to my destination.

As soon as I entered the store, someone to my right called out to welcome me. I turned and saw a young man sitting at a counter, resting his head on his arm. He didn't seem very enthusiastic.

"Wait, are you the kid from Bamboo Forest?" he asked.

"Yes, my name is Ryoma Takebayashi. You know about my store?"

"Nice to meet you, Ryoma. I'm Dancebell, and as you can see, I work at this bookstore. Only because my dad's making me, though. And we've been using your store lately, actually. If there's a particular book you want, I can try to find it for you."

The surprisingly talkative man looked to the cramped shelves further back in the dark store. They were packed with books. This didn't look like an easy place to find a specific book.

"Please do, if you don't mind," I said. "I don't have any one book in mind, but I'm looking for anything about medicine that I can find."

Whether I wanted to make medicine or poison, I needed the knowledge and the skills first. I did already have knowledge of the study of medicine itself, but that was given to me. Taking this chance to learn starting from the basics didn't sound like a bad idea, but I didn't have the time to become somebody's disciple. If not that, I at least wanted reference material to work from.

"Then come with me, please," the man said and led me to the shelf in the corner opposite the counter. "This shelf has books about medicine, but I'm not sure you'll be able to read them. They're pretty complicated."

"My grandmother taught me what I needed to know, so I'll probably be fine. But I wanted to make sure I knew the basics."

"Well, in that case, these will probably be a safe choice," he said and took out three books. Two of them were dense encyclopedias about medicinal and poisonous herbs. The third contained basic lessons for mixing your own medicine. Their covers all stated that they were edited by the medical guild, so they seemed trustworthy.

"How much for all three?"

"What, you want them all?"

"It depends on how much they cost, but yes, ideally. Is that a problem?"

The man shook his head. "Now that I think about it, your store seems pretty profitable. If you'll buy them, we'll sell them. Books aren't cheap, so not a lot of people purchase them casually."

"They're that expensive?"

"Well, if you want paper that'll last, it costs about ten sute a sheet at the cheapest. And books can be hundreds of pages. That alone can

make them a few thousand sute, to say nothing of the cost of ink and the author's cut of the money." In total, these books cost fifteen-thousand sute. That was no problem for me, but it was certainly a high price. For most people, this was by no means light spending. "How about these too?" the man asked, suggesting other books assuming I had the money. These weren't overseen by the guild, so they were probably self-published by individuals.

"I'll just take these three."

"Yeah? Oh well," he said, not bothering to push too hard. He swiftly took my cash and gave me the books. "Come back if you ever need more books. If you want one that's not selling, we can give you a special deal. Feel free to stop by any time." The man sluggishly returned to the counter and saw me off as I left the store. He didn't seem like a bad guy. If I was satisfied by these books, maybe I would use this store again.

Suddenly, a smelly gust of wind blew past me. I turned to see where it came from and saw some children dragging a cart full of garbage. Not only that, but there was a familiar face among them.

"Hello, aren't you Wist?" I asked.

"Oh, you're Ryoma, right?" the large boy leading the kids said. He seemed to remember me.

"Hey, what are you stopping for?! Ryoma?" another boy asked, coming up from behind the cart. He was small for his age.

"Sorry!" Wist apologized.

"I'm sorry I got in the way," I said. Wist was an ape beastkin, while the smaller boy, Beck, was a monkey beastkin. I met them during the monster-slaying job at the mine. "I shouldn't have stopped you."

"Not like I'm mad, really," Beck said. "Not mad at you or at Wist. He gets tripped up too easy, though."

"I see. Same as ever, then."

"So what do you want? I'll listen if you don't mind walking along with us."

"I just happened to see you and wanted to say hello. Are you working?"

"We're supervising them," he said. It did seem like all these kids were pretty young aside from Wist.

"Is this the city's garbage?"

"Right. They're collecting trash from around the city and taking it to the processing plant in the slums. The slum kids do this job most of the time."

"Huh, what happens to the garbage?"

"Either adults burn it at the processing plant, or it's taken outside the city and buried. We did this job too before we became

adventurers, but burning the trash or taking it outside town was a job for the adults, so I don't know much about that." The kids probably weren't allowed to for fear of monsters. "Even in town, you have to watch out for carriages and stuff. The adults do it early in the morning or late at night. It's easier to transport these things in the middle of the day, but these kids aren't old enough to do that yet, so we oversee them when we have the time. And Ruth and other folks take them to other places."

"So you're not doing this for a job? You chose to do it yourselves?"

"Back when we were doing this job, some older slum kids who became adventurers looked after us too. Seems pretty normal to me."

"I don't know whether it's normal, but it's a great thing that you're doing."

They may not have even had anything to gain from this, but they were paying back the kindness they received by doing the same for the younger children. They lived like a unified collective that all supported each other. While they were financially poor, maybe they were spiritually rich.

"What's so great about it? What's with the warm look?"

"Nothing, I just think it's great."

"You're kind of weirding me out."

"Sorry. I'll be going, then."

A lot happened when we first met, but I was sure they would turn out fine. They looked healthier than before, and not as tense. I prayed that they would continue to improve, then decided to go home by myself.

Chapter 3 Episode 24: The God of Magic and Academics

A month had passed since I returned from Lenaf. I woke up, went outside, and saw the refreshing blue morning sky. It was still nice in the mornings, but it was hot in the afternoons as of late, and that was likely to be true of today too. At the adventurer's guild, I was starting to see adventurers who knew ice magic looking to make a killing. Summer had arrived.

I spent the last few days making a surplus of waterproof cloth in preparation for a long journey, so the outside air felt all the more refreshing. I hated to stay cooped up in the mine with this kind of weather. I had less work to do now, so I wanted to use this day to take a break.



With that being said, I didn't actually have any plans. I decided I might as well stop by my store, but the door was shut. I had completely forgotten that we implemented break days this month. Left with nothing else to do, I wandered around town at random until I ran into somebody.

"Oh, if it isn't Ryoma? What are you up to?" somebody said from nearby.

"Good morning, Pauline. My store's closed today, so I've just been taking a walk. The weather's too nice to waste the day sitting around at home."

Pauline walked up to me and smiled. "Agreed. Actually, as long as you're out and about, you should stop by my husband's store. He's got slime food for you."

"Thank you."

I followed Pauline to Sieg's store and took the blood, meat, and bones they were throwing out anyway. The warmer weather made the meat rot faster, so I received somewhat more than usual. These two had done so much to help me that I considered giving them a fridge in return, but that would only make me busier. Even the fridge at my store was just an ordinary box when I was out of town, so it wouldn't be a great gift.

"Mom!" somebody suddenly shouted inside the store.

“Not so loud, I can hear you!” Pauline shouted back. The voice came from Pauline’s rowdy son, Rick.

“You’re here too, Ryoma?”

“Good morning, Rick,” I said.

“You should’ve said good morning too, you punk!” Pauline said and jabbed Rick. “So what did you want?”

“Go, right! Thor’s here, so I’ll be going!”

“Oh, that time already?”

“Rick, are you going somewhere?” I asked.

“What, you don’t know, Ryoma? Today’s church-cleaning day.”

“Once every two months, the local kids clean the churches and run errands and so on,” Pauline explained.

“There’s no better way to thank the gods than by cleaning churches!”

I was kind of impressed that Rick was so enthusiastic about what amounted to sanitation work, but Pauline wryly smiled. “Don’t be tricked, my boy would never be that respectable. He’s just repeating crap he’s heard. All Rick wants is the sweets they get when the cleaning’s done.” Rick looked away as if he were guilty. “Anyway, are you gonna go clean, Ryoma?”

“I haven’t even heard about these cleaning days until now,” I said. It didn’t sound like a bad idea, especially considering I had nothing else to do at the moment. “You wouldn’t mind if I came along?”

“Not at all,” Rick said.

“Then I think I will.”

“Awesome! Then follow me!” Rick exclaimed, then raised his right hand and walked off. I said goodbye to Pauline and followed after him. “Ryoma, get a move on!”

“Just give me a second,” I said. Rick’s yelling was annoying, but he was nice enough to wait for me to catch up. Maybe in the future, he’d grow to be a caring sort of older brother type.

We found Renny and Thor waiting for Rick outside. When the four of us arrived at the church, a young nun who I remembered seeing before told us to follow the signs until we got to the chapel. There were arrow-shaped signs all around the church, so it would be hard to get lost. In the chapel, there were sixty children and a single adult woman to supervise them. Considering anyone was free to join, I didn’t know if this number of participants was a little or a lot. In any case, we sat and waited for the cleaning to begin. But when I sat in one of the chairs, a light appeared before me.



Strangely, I was warped by the usual bright light without even needing to pray. I looked around and found that I wasn’t in the usual

empty void. I was in a library, surrounded by enormous wooden bookshelves. They were packed full of books and looked heavy, but some of the shelves were floating in midair. This was clearly no ordinary library.

“Curious. So I can summon you too?” an unfamiliar voice said. I looked up and saw a thin man floating there. He slowly descended to the floor.

“Nice to meet you, I’m—”

“I know who you are. You’re the most recent migrant from Earth, aren’t you? I hear you’re quite the interesting one. I am Fernobelia, the god of magic and academics. This is my territory. You seem surprised to see how different this is from your experience with other gods, but this is the divine realm all the same. You will be able to return to the other world in time, so relax and make yourself at home.”



“Thank you,” I said. According to Tekun, this god was seldom seen. He seemed like sort of a grouch. More so than Tekun was, at least.

“It’s nothing. The gods you know say that they have been able to summon your soul and consciousness to our world, so I took this opportunity to try it myself. But I did so without your asking, so the least I can do is offer some hospitality,” Fernobelia said. He went on to explain that he was investigating why I could come to the divine realm, and since I happened to be in a church, he summoned me to see if I could give him any clues. It was essentially an experiment. “I’d like to ask you a few questions, if you don’t mind.”

I had no particular reason to object. Rather, I couldn’t object if I wanted to, so I said I would be happy to answer. He started by asking me about Earth and the life I lived there, then went on to ask about matters as trivial as my favorite food, about what was running through my head as I was being summoned to the divine realm, and about topics as serious as my thoughts on war and slavery. I answered all his questions, but couldn’t see the logic behind them.

“Thank you for your cooperation. I have one last question. What do you think about this world?”

It was too broad of a question to offer a precise answer, but I thought it was a good world. Of course, it wasn’t as if I had seen this whole world, and my information on it was lacking. But just about everyone I met was a good person and a friend. Magic, slimes, and other unique aspects of this world also interested me enough to provide a fulfilling life, so there was nothing to complain about. I was sincerely glad I came to this world.

“Hm, I see now,” Fernobelia said.

“Wait, did I say that out loud?”

“No, I read your mind,” he admitted. Apparently if my mind was being read, I had no way to notice. “Sorry, I was a bit wary of you, so I wanted to see what you really thought.”

“Wary of me? Why?”

“Unfortunately, not everyone from Earth has been like you.”

Fernobelia explained that some people from Earth became corrupted by the power they received and used it to commit crimes. Some didn’t even have ill intent, but they used their power incorrectly and unknowingly brought about disasters, so Fernobelia wanted to use this first meeting to judge my character. I could see where he was coming from. If I were a god and someone used power I granted them to wreak havoc, I would be infuriated.

“Indeed. If someone has clearly dangerous thoughts, we don’t bring them to this world to begin with, but there’s always the

possibility that their newfound power changes them over time. And after we've already brought someone over to our world, there's little we can do to interfere aside from try and convince them to repent. We can get directly involved if they try something that may destroy the world, but that seldom happens. By the time such a thing does happen, the damage has already been done anyway. I'm glad you understand," Fernobelias said, apparently having read my mind again. I had been lost in thought, but his complaining got my attention again.

"There's a lot more I want to do, but I'll be careful not to let my power corrupt me. I can't be absolutely certain that won't happen, sadly."

"If you claimed to know for certain, I wouldn't trust you. I'll take your honesty to mean that you're taking this seriously."

"Thank you. I'll do the best I can," I said just as the light began to shine bright again.

"Looks like the time has come. I'll say one last thing. The abnormalities with you are not actually all that special. This applies only to those from Earth, but a fair number of them have had qualities similar to yourself," Fernobelias said. By abnormalities, I could only guess he meant my ability to come to this world and take divine items out of it. "The cause is unclear, but there have been others in the past who could do things humans normally cannot. For some reason, it's been especially striking in your case, but that's all. The other gods are also aware of these prior occurrences, which is why they know it's not a sign of any problem with your body or mind. None of the other humans with these qualities have suddenly died or gone mad."

That reminded me of when Kufo talked about a saint who, upon her death, eliminated disease from the world. That certainly didn't sound like something a human could accomplish. I didn't think I was that worried about there being something wrong with me, but maybe I actually was. Hearing this from Fernobelias came as a great relief.

"Thank you for telling me," I said right as the light enveloped my body and I was sent back to the chapel. I was worried he didn't hear me, considering the timing of my departure. My feelings must have been apparent from my expression, because the other three kids asked me what was wrong. After the sudden encounter with a god, I had completely forgotten about them.

Chapter 3 Episode 25: Volunteer Work

I made something up to explain myself as we waited until the adult woman said that it was time to start. She began by thanking us for participating, then assigned jobs to each of the children. I joined the other children in cleaning duty, but I didn't use magic or my scavenger slimes this time around. It would have been much faster if I did, but after seeing how hard the other kids were working, I would have felt bad about taking an easier route. I ended up cleaning the large church until after noon, when we got sandwiches for lunch. Then it was time for the sweets. Rick was looking forward to this so much that he could barely contain himself. These sweets would have to be amazing to live up to his excitement.

What I received was a small bag tied up with a ribbon. It contained four cookies. The rest of the children were eating them on the spot, so I decided to as well. They had the fragrance and mild sweetness of baked goods, along with a fruity flavor from what seemed to be some strong jam. They were admittedly pretty delicious. When the kids finished their sandwiches and cookies, some formed groups and played in the garden, while others looked to the entrance to the church like they were waiting for something. Thor, Rick, and Renny were among the latter.

"What are you three doing?" I asked.

"I'm waiting for the old man!" Rick answered first, but all that told me was that they were waiting for somebody.

"There's a nice man who always comes after we're done cleaning, and he teaches us how to fight and use swords and stuff," Thor said. He further explained that this man was an ex-adventurer, and that not only did he donate to the church, but he tried to teach the orphans how to fight and survive on their own by the time they grew up, and he did it for free. It was volunteer work, in other words. Since it was an opportunity to learn for free, all the young boys who participated in cleaning day and yearned to become adventurers participated in the lessons too. These lessons were designed to be appropriate for young children, so they sounded underwhelming for me or other working adventurers, but that was to be expected.

"I understand why Rick's interested, but you and Renny are too?" I asked. Rick was a rambunctious kid, so it seemed to make sense for

him. Thor didn't come across that way, though. Maybe all boys had some interest in adventurers.

"It's not like girls aren't supposed to fight," Renny said. "And you never know if there'll be some creepy guy who won't leave you alone one day. Besides, I have to look after Rick."

"Mom says that I should get into better shape," Thor said. "I'm not trying to be that lazy, though."

"You're just so meek! Training will make you more of a man!"

"Sure, I guess." Thor said. It sounded like he wasn't especially assertive.

Soon the other children began to holler. I looked to the entrance and saw a man with a scary face heading this way. He turned out to be Worgan, the guildmaster of the adventurer's guild. The children weren't afraid of him, and some even gave him hugs. He dealt with them until he suddenly turned to look at me.

"Oh, if it isn't Ryoma! What are you doing here?"

"My store is closed today, so I was just taking a walk around town. Then I heard it was cleaning day at the church and decided to join in. I thought it would be a nice chance to meet the locals."

"Nice idea. Oh right, so if you've still got time, you mind helping me out a bit?"

"With what?" I asked. Worgan whispered into my ear. "Ah, I see."

When he told me what he needed, I agreed to help. While the children were running and doing basic training in the main hall, I pulled twenty scavenger slimes out of my dimension home.

"All right! Today we'll have some more serious combat training!" Worgan shouted. "Ryoma, bring them over!"

"Got it," I said and brought the scavenger slimes before the children, surprising them. They were only slimes, but this seemed to be their first time training on actual monsters.

"Today you kids'll be fighting these slimes."

"I'll use recovery magic to heal any damage you inflict, so don't hold back," I said, but it was more likely that the children were going to get hurt. Not only did the scavenger slimes have plenty of training, but they knew martial arts and possessed resistance to physical attacks, whereas their opponents only had wooden swords. And those swords would only have the strength of children behind them. It was nearly impossible that my slimes would be harmed. Just to be safe, I had my slimes focus on dodging and only allowed them to attack with body slams so the children would be safe too. The worst that could happen would be a kid falling over and scraping themselves.

"Ryoma, are you sure?!" Rick asked. When I said it was fine, he was the first to express his interest. I looked to Worgan and he didn't seem to disapprove, so I let Rick have a go at it. Rick readied his

training sword as the other children watched closely.

The scavenger slime didn't attack, waiting patiently for Rick to strike first. Seeing this, Rick raised the sword above his head and swung down at the slime. But Rick barely knew proper form when it came to swordsmanship, so his swing was slow and easily avoided. It was normal for a boy Rick's age, but of course, the scavenger dodged the attack. Frustrated, Rick began to unleash a series of attacks, his form gradually getting worse until he was flailing his sword at random. This went on for a few minutes until he began to get tired, and when he paused after one swing, the slime hit him with a body slam. It didn't seem to hurt, but it did knock Rick on his behind.

"And that's the match!" Worgan announced. "Rick, you're still a tiny kid, and you can't really train properly just yet. Don't let losing get you down too much. But you did let it get to your head when your opponent dodged your attack, and that's something you need to watch out for. All of your attacks after the first one were completely haphazard and left you open to attack. You need to think about every move you make." Rick nodded and sulked off into the crowd of children. The rest of the kids took turns fighting and receiving advice from Worgan.

"All right! Now think about what I taught you and fight again!" Worgan said. The children and slimes were split up so everyone could fight at once. I provided iron and metal slimes for the children who were advised to practice hitting harder, since they could take some heavy blows. I walked around observing them and offering healing magic as necessary. Worgan walked around as well and offered each child their own advice. The lessons continued until night, and ended before it started to get dark.

Worgan and I saw the children off, then finally had a chance to relax. I didn't do much aside from watch them, but the fear that a child could get seriously injured at any time made me unusually tense. Thankfully there were no such accidents.

"Thanks for the help today," Worgan said.

"I didn't have anything else to do. Taking breaks is nice, but I always find myself with too much time on my hands, so this was just perfect."

"Yeah? Then next time you're free, you should help out with their lessons again. Your slimes are great training partners. I could even give you a job training newbies at the adventurer's guild, if you want."

I didn't like the sound of that idea. There were plenty of times that I had to train subordinates for work, but I had never taught another person how to fight. And even for the jobs where I needed to teach someone, I never thought I was terribly good at it. The skills I

would be teaching would presumably also be used in battles of life or death. If these new adventurers were going to learn from anyone, it would best be from a master with plenty of teaching experience.

Besides, the only teaching methods that came to mind were what I picked up from my father. When he taught techniques, I had to put them into practice right away. We sparred repeatedly until an attack landed. If the opponent was knocked down, attack them again. If they didn't get up, keep attacking. Keep attacking until they got up. Never stop, that was my father's way of doing things. If an enemy hit you, they wouldn't wait until you got to your feet. I didn't think he was wrong about that, but if I put those ideas into practice, I could end up injuring tons of people. In fact, I had barely ever held back against human opponents before.

"Not interested, then?" Worgan said.

"I've only really trained with one person, you see, and I never had to hold back against my master."

Both here and on Earth, there were plenty of people taking disciples, and I wasn't aware of any students who held back against their masters. That would be akin to underestimating them. And in an actual fight, there's no need to restrain oneself.

"Sure, I get that, but you must've gotten in fights with friends or something. And you've captured people who attacked you, right?"

"I wouldn't use combat techniques in little fights with friends. You should try to talk things out first."

"What a lame answer. I mean, you're right, but still."

"When I'm attacked or dealing with thieves, I don't try to talk it out, but I also don't hold back. If I have to, I just target their limbs. I can hit them with my full strength and still not kill them that way, rather than targeting their heads or vitals."

"Oh right, you break their bones."

If you know how to use your power properly, there's seldom a need to hold back. We were taught for generations to either use none of our power, or all of it. I won't say that I've never once held back, but when I got into personal fights on Earth, I generally didn't fight back at all. It would have been far more trouble to go on the offensive. This did have a negative effect, though. When I first started teaching combat skills to my slimes, many of them died during training. I also more recently messed up when I was hiring Dolce as a guard at the store.

While I was choosing my words carefully, two nuns brought us drinks. "Worgan, thank you for coming in today," one said.

"You too, Ryoma," the other said. "Here's a little something as thanks."

"Thank you," I said and accepted it, then we talked for a bit

longer. The older woman was Betta, who made my status board. The young girl's name was Belle. To my surprise, they were the only ones running this big church. Not only did they have to look after the building, but they took in children with no parents too.

"Couldn't you use more helpers?" I asked.

"It isn't easy, but this is part of a nun's training."

"Thank you for your concern. There are other children and adults who feel the same way, and they help to support us."

They asserted that they were fine. Next, they had questions for me.

"Is it hard to take care of slimes?"

"Do you have to learn taming magic first?"

They apparently wanted to keep a few slimes at the church. All of their questions were about slimes. I answered them politely before asking why they wanted slimes in the first place.

"We were watching them today, and they were just adorable."

"If they can be safely obtained with taming magic, maybe they would also help the children learn how to take care of something."

It sounded like they wanted to treat slimes like a pet rabbit at an elementary school. It didn't seem like they had fully settled on what to do yet, but I told them I could help them out.

"Then we'll tell you when we've made our decision. I'm always available to talk."

"You would do that for us? Thank you."

The conversation ended there. The sky was getting dark, so I said goodbye and left the church. On the way home, I reflected on that day and felt that it was a bit different from any previous day. Helping to clean the church was a job I could have happily accepted from anyone. Participating in local events was starting to make me feel like a part of the community. I hoped that tomorrow would go just as well.

Extra Story: A Magazine Journalist Feels Something Is Wrong

In a dimly lit and mostly empty cafe, two men were sitting at a table, trying to avoid attention.

“Thank you for your cooperation.”

“Don’t ever come back. And another thing—”

“I know. I won’t write about you. It’s your company that we want to write about. Farewell.”

Leaving the disheartened man behind, the other man stood up. He paid the bill, left the cafe, and took a cellphone out of his pocket.

“Hello, this is Urami.”

“Urami? How’d it go?”

“Perfect. I even got proof.”

“Excellent!”

“I’ll continue gathering information and return to the office tonight.”

“Good, keep it up.”

“You can count on me.”

Urami kept the conversation brief and simply stated what was necessary. After the phone was hung up, he checked the clock. There was a bit of time before his next job, so he decided to get a bite to eat at another cafe. He didn’t think twice before ordering the first sandwich and coffee listed on the menu, then lit a cigarette and enjoyed smoking for the few moments he could. This was the only part of his day where he didn’t have to think about anything.

“Here you are, an egg sandwich and coffee,” the waiter said as he left a plate, then left. Urami silently watched him go. He didn’t touch the sandwich until he was finished smoking. When he put it out in the ashtray, he began to think again.

“*Sorry, neighbor, but there’s a better story here than I was expecting,*” Urami thought to himself. Urami lived next door to Ryoma, and he was present when Ryoma’s corpse was found. He was a magazine journalist, and he later investigated Iguchi and Ryoma’s workplace. “*That company’s got dirt hiding under every crevice.*”

Ryoma’s company was undergoing massive scrutiny online after the incident with Iguchi went public. Disgruntled ex-employees began to anonymously complain about the company online, and numerous others gathered further information. A website listing all known data

about the company and the incident with Iguchi went up this morning. Urami saw this as a chance to improve his standing within the editorial department, but it was a precarious situation. If he wanted to seize this opportunity, he needed to uncover even deeper information. He primarily sought out members of Ryoma's company, and he found that this job was going unusually well.

"I thought it'd take a bit more digging, but I hit the jackpot here. Everything I investigate turns up a new story. My reputation should skyrocket after this, but considering how easy this has been, I'm impressed this has all been secret for so long. Well, can't complain about an easy job."

His job was to use any means necessary to expose dark secrets to the public. Sometimes the law got in the way, or sometimes his targets were too powerful, so after those painful experiences, the ease of these last few days felt lacking. Even with the most minor information, following the lead inevitably led to something. Whatever he asked and wherever he asked it, there was something to discover.

"It's been going so smoothly that it's almost eerie," Urami thought as he shoved the sandwich into his mouth and washed it down with coffee. *"Speaking of eerie, why didn't that guy just up and quit working there, anyway?"* The company assigned excessive work, had violent bosses, hid the crimes and mistakes of employees hired through connections, and treated Ryoma's department poorly. Urami had investigated the company enough to learn a fair bit about Ryoma's working conditions. Nothing about it was entirely unique to this company, and similar stories could be found elsewhere. But in Ryoma's case, it was even worse than the complaints Urami so often heard. If Urami were in that position, he would have resigned right away, so he couldn't comprehend why Ryoma stayed there for sixteen years.

Urami asked for the bill, finishing the meal as quickly as possible. After he paid, he headed out to town and sought information once again.



Urami visited the local shopping district. Dazzling neon and bustling crowds filled the place at night, but it was currently the middle of the day. Many of the stores were closed, and the crowds were sparse. Urami entered an alleyway and came to a gay bar called MITHUKO. Someone called out to him from a seat further back in the dark room.

"The hell d'you want? We're closed, didn't you see the sign? Get outta here," said a woman who was wiping a table. She looked at him dubiously.

“Sorry to intrude. I’m a journalist, you see,” Urami said and handed her a business card.

“Great, now bugger off, would you? I have nothing to say to the press.”

“Don’t be like that. Would you mind chatting with me for a bit?”

“No thanks. I already know why you’re here. This is about Take’s company, isn’t it? You people just wanna make a profit off someone’s death,” the woman complained, disgusted at Urami. She looked to be in her sixties and wore a thin dress. Her excess flab jiggled as she tried to force Urami out. But he didn’t go anywhere.

“Come on, please?”

“I said no! Get out now, or I’m calling the cops!”

“I just want to talk. If my company doesn’t publish something about this incident, somebody else will. His company’s already being excoriated online, as I’m sure you know.”

“And why should that mean I have to talk to you?” the woman asked, expressing even more displeasure. She was right that by writing an article about this, Urami and his company stood to profit, and that was Urami’s biggest goal. But he had other reasons too.

“I’d personally like to learn more about him. I actually happened to be there when his body was found.”

“What?” the woman said, not expecting to hear that. Urami then said that he lived next door to Ryoma. “Were you close to Take?”

“Somewhat. We were both too busy to see each other all that often. But he helped me out when I first moved in. He was a nice guy.”

“Yeah. Too nice. And clumsy, too. He kept making a fool of himself until the day he died,” the woman muttered sadly. Urami told her about his memories of Ryoma. All he had were stories of his small acts of kindness, but that was enough to bring to mind her own memories of Ryoma.

“I want to expose the boss who abused him, and the actions of the company at large. I can’t deny that I’m going to make something off it myself in the process, but my questions go deeper than that. Why did he keep working there, in spite of everything? Is there anything I can do to honor his memory? Can you help me with that?” Urami pleaded to the woman.

Urami was by no means a man with much passion for justice. Rather, like the woman implied, he would do anything to get a scoop. But this particular case began with the death of his neighbor. He was also present when the body was found, so he felt somewhat more attached to this job than average. His personal investment was enough to convince the woman.

“Come with me. I’ll give you a drink,” she said and headed to the

counter. Urami followed her and sat at a seat across from her. "Sorry I got so snippy."

"Oh, no. I'm the one barging in on you..."

"It's fine, you're hardly the first."

"Were there other journalists?"

"I don't know how they ended up finding this place, but they've been coming nonstop since the day Take died. They even showed up at my house this morning. I've driven every one of them away, though."

"I'm sorry about that. Not everyone in our profession is that way," Urami said and clicked his tongue. *"That's such an old way of doing things. The mass media already takes enough heat nowadays, assholes. You're only making things harder for the rest of us."*

"So what did you want to ask about specifically?"

"I want to know what Takebayashi and the other employees from his company acted like at this bar."

"Well, Take was a regular here, but only because he was attending the others, from what it seemed like. I remember hearing that he didn't drink otherwise. And they came to my bar because it was their favorite, aside from all the bars they're banned from."

"Why are they banned from bars?"

"They're the worst drunks imaginable. These people would come in here and say the most vile, homophobic shit. Like, they're the ones who chose to come to a gay bar in the first place. They were always so full of themselves, and they loved to look down on everyone, so a lot of the bars around here banned them outright. Take apologized for them every time, though, so I gave them a pass. I think he was the biggest victim in all this. Do you mind if I smoke?"

"No, go ahead."

The woman took a cigarette out of the counter, lit it up, and inhaled deeply. She rested her head on her arm as she kept talking. "I think he could've laid into those people if he wanted to, but he never did. He always did what they said. For all the shit they threw at us, Take got it even worse."

"Can you be more specific?"

"They'd go on about how they didn't like how he acted at work, or how they didn't like the way he looked at them, things like that. They'd also act like they were the older, wiser ones, but their opinions could completely change from one day to the next, and nothing they said meant anything. Oh, that reminds me of something," the woman said. Urami tightened his grip on his pen. "When they got drunk, they would call Take a traitor. They'd say they were being generous letting a traitor stay at the company, nasty stuff like that. I always wondered what that was about."

“I knew that the company treated Takebayashi poorly, but did they actually call him a traitor?”

“I don’t know much more about that. I was curious, but he never told me about it when I asked. In fact, Take never disparaged or complained about his company. I can’t imagine he literally betrayed anyone. I doubt he was happy about doing anything to help these people either, but he was an honest man. And if he were capable of doing something especially cunning, I think he would have just quit the company anyway.”

Maybe he had his reasons, or maybe he simply made a mistake and paid the price for it. Neither Urami or the woman knew the details, but it was odd how they chose to call him that word. Urami jotted this down as something worth investigating.

“That’s all I can tell you about their insults. To be honest, I didn’t pay much attention to that. The way they made him chug rectified spirits and beat him with bottles was a much bigger concern.”

“Can you tell me about that? Rectified spirits have extremely high alcohol content, don’t they? And they committed acts of violence too?”

“That’s right. These spirits were 96% alcohol, while your average whiskey averages around 40%. One bottle of whiskey is enough to get most people drunk, and these drinks were twice as bad. I still can’t believe what they did.”

“And what happened after he was forced to drink this?”

“Take was fine. It was almost scary how well he could hold his liquor. He seemed pretty drunk, but he was able to walk home well enough on his own. Hell, he probably would’ve been worse off if he couldn’t! I considered calling an ambulance at the time, though. After this happened a few times, I stopped stocking those spirits.”

“I see. And what about the violence?”

“That was mostly instigated by the chief of their department. Things would escalate until he lost his temper and beat Take with a bottle. And not just empty ones. After he started, his cronies would join in. We got used to it after a while,” the woman said and slumped her shoulders. “Now I wonder if things would have been different if I reported them to the police. I had plenty of chances.”

“I don’t want to place any blame on you, and I won’t write about this in the article. But can you tell me why you didn’t report any of this?”

“A few reasons. I didn’t want to subject my bar to the cops, and Take asked me not to make a big deal out of these incidents. He hated to cause trouble. It seemed like he was always treated poorly, and if something happened, maybe it could have seriously threatened his position.”

“Did he have no choice but to stay with the company?”

“I guess so. He never quit, did he? It’d be easy for outsiders to suggest that he should have, but he couldn’t quit whether he wanted to or not. Those sorts of ultra-exploitative businesses are all the same way.”

“True.”

“And maybe there was some particular reason. I listen to a lot of people’s grievances as part of my job, and some of them have high wages but hate how they can’t go home on time, while others would love to work overtime if it meant higher wages. Everyone has different values. I can’t imagine he was sticking with those scumbags because he liked them, I’ll say that much.”

“What was he like? Did he ever get mad at them?”

“No, he just about never did. Even when he was beaten and forced to drink, he just said that he could handle it. But if he couldn’t handle it, maybe he would’ve accepted that too.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean he seemed like he wouldn’t have minded if it killed him. He was generally cheerful and always claimed to be doing fine, but in these brief moments, he seemed like he’d given up on everything.”

Urami was Ryoma Takebayashi’s neighbor, but never spent much time with him. He wrote down the woman’s impressions of him in great detail. He also asked about the unique traits and behavior of the employees who Ryoma attended. Right around when he finished asking questions, his phone began to ring.

“Pardon, I need to take this.”

“It’s fine, go ahead.”

Urami took out the phone. “Hello, this is Urami. Chief, I’m interviewing someone right now. Oh? I’m in the usual shopping district, yes. It’s not that far away. What is it?” It sounded like there was a lot of chaos in the editorial department, and the chief seemed to be in a panic. Urami asked knowing that something must have happened, but the answer still shocked him. “Somebody’s been injured?!”

Someone at the very company he was investigating, from the same department as Ryoma, got into another incident. The company’s reputation would inevitably get even worse, but to Urami, this gave him yet another lead.

“Understood. I’ll be there as soon as possible. What was the location, and who was the culprit?” Urami whispered, wary of the woman across the counter. He reviewed his notes again. The name he was given for the culprit matched one of the names he wrote down. “He had black hair, glasses, and looked like the studious type? Chief, there’s something I’m curious about. I’ll call you back later, if you

don't mind. Thank you, goodbye."

"What was all that about?" the woman said.

"Was this one of the men who beat Takebayashi with a bottle?"

Urami asked and showed her a picture he pulled up on his phone.

"Yes, I know him! He's one of the chief's cronies! Did he do something?"

"He was drinking in the middle of the day, and he ended up beating an acquaintance with a bottle for joking about the company's reputation online."

"Oh dear! I'm not surprised he'd do something like that."

"I need to go dig up some info on that, so I'll be going now. Thank you for your cooperation."

"Oh, wait a moment!" the woman said and ran to the back of the bar. Urami wanted to get a move on, but waiting was the least he could do to repay her. A couple of minutes later, the woman returned with a videotape from a bygone era. "Take this. There's a recording of Take drinking with those people on this tape."

"Really?! Surprised you'd have that."

"One of our employees got sick of them and recorded them in secret. It's an illegal recording, and it could've made trouble for Take, so we never ended up using it, but I kept it around. I was cleaning up yesterday and considered throwing it out when I found it. I never spoke up about what they did to him, so maybe I'm in no position to talk, but there's no point in me keeping this anymore. Plus, I want you to make those assholes pay."

And so, Urami obtained even more of the information he desired. His intentions with this information were obvious. As to his thoughts about all this and what would happen next... well, that's a story for another day.

Afterword

Hello, this is Roy, the author of *By the Grace of the Gods*! Thank you for purchasing Volume 4!

Thanks to the support of my readers and the assistance of everyone in the production process, I've been able to put these out regularly. A manga version has also started, and the first volume of that has been released.

Second editions are already being printed too, so I have a lot to be thankful for. I get to release these books, readers buy them, and I earn a living off it. Maybe I shouldn't be saying this as a professional writer, but I'm more thankful than I'm capable of expressing in words!

And after I mentioned how I appreciated the fan letters I got in the afterword of Volume 3, I received many more messages and comments on *Shousetsuka ni Narou*. I didn't think my comments were especially interesting, but I was surprised and thankful to see that people are reading these too.

I hope everyone's excited, because Volume 4 is only just the beginning. I'll be following my supervisor's guidance and continuing to do the best I can, so I hope for your continued support.

Bonus Short Stories

Caulkin's Initial Intent

"Goodnight, Caulkin."

"Mhm, see you tomorrow. Pleasant dreams."

I parted ways with Tony in the hallway of the employee lodging, then went straight back to my room and collapsed onto my bed. The day was exhausting, but fulfilling. That was, of course, because I finally knew something that had stymied so many researchers before me. I learned the conditions for slime evolution.

Unfortunately, I didn't accomplish this on my own. Rather, I heard about it from my boss who made the discovery. For the time being, though, that refreshing feeling of learning took priority. It was like I'd reached a milestone in life.

The main condition for slime evolution was food. It was so simple, and yet that theory was widely dismissed. It was a complete blind spot. Not to make excuses for my own failure to see it, but my boss was most likely able to make the discovery thanks to a childlike lack of common sense.

When we asked how he came to his conclusion, he smiled and answered us with amusement. The way he looked had brought back a deluge of memories. There was a time when I used to smile the same way, though it had been long forgotten.

Everyone gets into research for different reasons. For the boss, it was slimes, but for me, it was fairies. For as long as I can remember, studying was my only redeeming quality. As with the son of any noble, I was somewhat forced to learn magic and swordsmanship, but I was slow to improve and utterly hopeless at either.

But one day, after my despised swordsmanship class was over and I went outside to cool off, I saw a light floating in a forest near the training grounds. I thought it was a firefly at first. This forest was thought to be mostly safe, but entering it alone was forbidden. Maybe my mind was hazy from the fatigue of sword fights, though, because my curiosity drew me to follow the light. My swordsmanship teacher must not have been paying attention, because he didn't stop me from setting foot inside the forest, where I saw the fairy.

Fairies are a humanoid type of monster. Even the largest of them can fit on the palm of an adult's hand. They thrive in environments full of nature, and generally prefer warm climates. Fairies seldom

show themselves around humans, and they never try to harm humans unless they're threatened.

Being someone who was only good at studying, this was the first time in my life that I was thankful for something. Before I could think twice, I was mustering up all my magical energy and trying to form a contract with the fairy. That was just how beautiful and glorious it was. My surprise only grew when the fairy didn't reject my contract.

Fairies are as much a monster as any other, and they're excellent at magic. Their small, weak appearance masks their immense amounts of magical energy. They're considered extremely difficult to form a contract with, and they usually react by resisting and causing any attempts to fail. I succeeded easily. The fairy I found seemed to be friendly. My teacher and parents later scolded me for entering the forest without permission, but they accepted the fairy, whose name was Mariage, as my familiar. We abruptly parted ways several years later, but we spent almost all our time together until then.

I don't know how I forgot all of this. I was obsessed with the fairy at the time. I didn't care about gaining greater power or influence in the world; I just wanted to know more. I played with Mariage during the day, asking her many questions. At night, I stayed up late writing down everything I learned about fairies, receiving criticism from my parents and teachers.

Even then, it still wasn't enough. Seeking to become a monster researcher, I joined a laboratory, all because I wanted to research fairies. But at some point, that ambition disappeared, and I only cared about achieving something, anything. If Mariage saw me now, I wonder what she would think. Better now than if she saw me at the laboratory, at least. I was in a dire state at the time.

It might be nice to start researching fairies again sometime. There was my job and the slime research to focus on now, but I could simply do it as a hobby. Maybe putting aside some time to just indulge in research for research's sake could be good. Thankfully, working at this laundromat gave me ample time and income. Once I saved up some money, I could take a vacation to search for slimes and fairies. My boss seemed to have great strength for his age, and my old friend Leipin was an A-Rank adventurer. If I asked for their help, I could possibly go into some dangerous territory. Even just thinking about it was getting me excited.

That was a path that had already closed to me once before, but trying to wander back onto it could be interesting. Living with childlike wonder and trying to learn everything I could didn't sound like a bad idea. And if I wanted to make sure I could do that, I needed to keep putting in my best effort at work tomorrow.

Maria's Lesson

In the break room at Bamboo Forest, two women were chatting. One was bright and cheerful, while the other looked concerned. A third woman approached them.

"I'm back!" said Maria.

"Oh, there you are," said Jane.

"Maria, are you all right?" asked Fina. "You were called about what happened the other day, right?"

"I'm fine!" said Maria. "The boss warned me about managing the slimes, but he wasn't mad at me! He was happy, actually!"

"See, what'd I tell you?" said Jane. "The boss would never shout at someone over something so silly. You worry too much, Fina."

"Maybe I do, but those cleaner slimes are important to the boss, and to this establishment. What if something happened to them?" Fina argued to explain herself, seemingly aware that she was overthinking it.

"Sure, I get it," Jane said, not actually interested. "So are you going to be changing jobs or something, Maria?"

"Not really! I was just told that if a slime suddenly wants to eat something different, that could mean it's going to evolve and impact our work, so we need to isolate it. Then the boss will just take it in to look after on his own."

Jane laughed. "Yeah, I figured. The boss sure loves slimes."

"I'm glad to hear that nothing happened," said Fina.

"Yeah, but I ought to learn how to control slimes a bit better," said Maria. The commotion ended with only minor damage, but it was caused by Maria's failure to properly manage the slimes. She was usually an airhead, but she knew when she made mistakes.

"Speaking of which, how does taming magic let you control monsters?" asked Fina.

"Lots of ways, from what Lobelia told me!" Maria answered. "For example, the boss can apparently communicate with his monsters entirely through his thoughts. But you have to be really compatible for that to work. Most people need to use flutes, whips, food, things like that to make their monsters understand orders. And that takes a bunch of time and training. I do it with my thoughts, but I'm not as good at it as the boss, so I carry the slimes in a basket when they need to be transported. Back when I started the job, I told them to just eat whatever they wanted to eat. I think that's why that slime ate the charcoal, so I really have to give better orders!"

The casual tone of Maria's voice didn't make her sound that serious, but she was reflecting on her mistakes as best she could. As long as she strived to fix her problems, she would likely never be fired.



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By the Grace of the Gods: Volume 4
by Roy

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